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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 9 June 2003

Lundi 9 juin 2003

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 9 June 2003

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 9 juin 2003

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 2, 2003, on the motion for second reading of 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 Acting Speaker (Mr David Christopherson): It's my understanding that the member for Niagara Centre had concluded his 20 minutes on the floor. Therefore, since he is present this evening, we will begin with two-minute responses. The floor is open.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): It's always interesting to hear the member from Niagara Centre and his comments. I always thought he would be a strong proponent of providing some relief for seniors, particularly those on fixed incomes. I'm sure if he had the opportunity to input on the parameters of who should qualify for this relief, he would likely welcome that. Perhaps he may have that opportunity. But if he votes against it, unfortunately I think it would be a vote against seniors.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): The only positive thing with respect to this rebate for seniors is that we are actually talking about seniors. For the last few years, if there is one group that has been hit and hit hard, it is seniors. This is what they are telling me: "This may be because there is an election coming. They want to give us something." Unfortunately, there are seniors out there who need help and they will accept anything the government brings their way. They're in such dire need because over the years they have been hit with user fees for drugs, and other drugs have been taken off the Ontario drug benefit plan. I mean, you name it—hydro bills went up, and water, gas, electricity and everything else.

One thing that didn't go up was their measly monthly pensions. Pensions did not go up. So they are saying,

"We welcome anything. It is not much. It's not enough compensation for what they did to us during the last few years, but, hey, anything that is going to come our way." Let me say to the government that maybe it's too little, too late. Seniors deserve a lot more than they are getting. They do deserve a lot more than they are getting. It would be my suggestion to the government to review it and say to seniors, "You know, we have been cutting too far and too deep. We've been hitting you too hard and it's about time that we say, 'Mea culpa.' Let's give the seniors the recognition that they really and truly deserve so they can say, 'Finally, the government is coming our way.'"

1850

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): My colleague, Mr Kormos, made it clear that New Democrats are opposing this move. We voted against it once, and we're going to continue to do so. I'm glad that one of the Conservative members mentioned seniors, because I think it's important to hear what seniors have to say about this proposal. This comes from a Toronto Star article, dated April 5, 2003:

"Pensioner Mae Harman admits it's a struggle to pay ever-increasing property taxes on her modest north Toronto bungalow.

"But she wants no part of last week's provincial budget plan to give her a rebate on the education portion of her local tax bill.

"As a senior I just think it's deplorable," says the 83-year-old co-founder of the Ontario Coalition of Seniors' Organizations.

"I'd certainly like to get some extra money, but not at the expense of public education," she says. "Seniors value education and believe it's important to support it."

Here's another quotation: "The sop to seniors of relief from education taxes, which will most benefit those with the most expensive properties, is an insult to grandparents and the majority of seniors. It's totally ridiculous," says Harman, whose coalition includes more than 150 groups, representing more than 500,000 seniors across the province."

She wasn't the only one. Here are friends of the Tories: "John Williamson, Ontario director of the Canadian Taxpayers' Federation, says his organization's main problem with the measure is that it reverses the 1999 Tory pledge to give all property taxpayers a break....

"This is a broken promise on the eve of an election leaving a lot of people high and dry and pandering to an

important demographic group for the Conservative Party,' he says. 'It's not good tax policy and it's very poor public policy.'"

So there's what some people do think of this.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): The issue of a seniors' tax credit on their property taxes is one that has been around for a long time. A number of the seniors in my riding have approached me over the last eight years. They have pushed for this, and pushed for it very hard, I will add. They said they've made their contributions to society. They feel that as long as the government is increasing the amount of money that it is funding public education, which we are—we're funding it to the tune of over \$16 billion this year—they can't see why they can't have a tax break after all the contributions they made. It is not an exaggeration to say that I've had more than 100, over the course of the last eight years, indicate to me that they felt some relief was in order.

Now, if you take into account that only a small minority of people actually come to their MPP and speak to them, I think you get an idea of how many seniors really want this. They know that the Liberals' propaganda about "education cutbacks" is just that: propaganda. There have been no cutbacks. The funding is ever-greater, in spite of a reduced enrolment—a reduced enrolment, and the boards are still getting more money.

I know you have a hard time with that on the Liberal side. Through you, Speaker, I know that the Liberals have a hard time with that, but that is a fact of life. The seniors really feel that they're entitled to some of this money. The vast majority of seniors are in low middle-income or low-income areas. They want any advantage they can to hold on to their properties, in some cases the houses they have had all their lives, in some cases their cottages that have been in the family for four and five generations. They would just like to hold on to this.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Niagara Centre has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Well, as a matter of fact, on Saturday evening I was at the Chetwood Seniors' Centre in west St Catharines. They had their annual dinner, and some of the St Catharines city councillors and I were serving dinner. A good number of seniors there; a whole lot of good folks. I know most of them. Good people, decent people. I know this government would have wanted them to be talking about Bill 43—not one concern raised about Bill 43. What they were mostly concerned about was the high-priced, taxpayer-funded junket taken by one Chris Stockwell, then Minister of Energy, through Europe. They were asking me, "Did we hear you say he spent \$27,000 on airline tickets alone?" I said, "Yup; 27 grand of your money on airfare alone."

They were questioning me, "Is it true that it cost 10 grand for his ground transportation for one week in Paris?" I went, "Yup; 10 grand paid for by the OPG." It might have been a little more, but that's a conservative estimate.

They said, "He really went to Rome, London, Paris and Glasgow on the taxpayers' tab?" I said, "Yup."

They were saying, "He really spent 500 bucks a night on hotel room suites?" I went, "Yup."

These are folks who are hard-pressed to find the money to spend a couple of weeks in Florida in the wintertime because they can't afford the health insurance premiums. These are people who worked hard all their lives and have seen their pensions diminished because this government hasn't enacted the pension reform that New Democrats are proposing to protect workers' pensions and fix pension plans. These are people who are scared that their grandkids aren't going to be able to go to college and university because tuition fees have increased by over 150% in the last eight years. That's what seniors were concerned about, not Bill 43.

The Acting Speaker: The floor is open for further debate.

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): It's a pleasure to rise tonight on behalf of our government to speak about Bill 43, the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, 2003. When I listen to some of the comments I've heard in this House with regard to seniors—first of all, I should qualify that both of my parents are still alive so I know what seniors are all about. My mother is 90 years old and my father is 92 years old, so I know what it's like to deal with seniors. I find it difficult to believe that on the weekend, all that seniors in Welland wanted to talk about is some junket. The seniors in my riding call the office, and all they want to know is how they can apply for this credit. That's what they want to know. I'm sure the member for Chatham-Kent Essex, my colleague just next to me, has the same problem. There are an awful lot of seniors in this riding who want to know how they can apply for this credit.

Today we have more than 1.5 million of Ontario's approximately 12 million people who are age 65 and over. I dare say that each and every one of us is getting closer and closer to that, although some of us are a little further, but I certainly speak on my behalf and some of my colleagues. Understanding the implications for the future, the government is undertaking numerous initiatives to prepare for our rapidly aging population. If passed, this bill would ensure a safe and secure future for the seniors in this province.

As Minister Ecker said in her budget statement, "Ontario owes much to its seniors. They are our grandparents and parents, our aunts and uncles. Our seniors are the pioneers and builders who created this prosperous province we enjoy today." Our seniors have worked hard all their lives and deserve our government's consideration to ease them into their retirement. I may add that some are well into their retirement. Many seniors are living with rising costs such as property taxes that eat into their fixed incomes.

I do agree that many seniors face undue financial pressures, but I find it difficult that somebody in the same tone would vote against this particular bill. If they truly believe that seniors are facing undue financial pressure,

why would they vote against giving somebody a tax break, a refund? That's more money in their pockets, wallets and purses.

The 2003 budget supports these seniors by proposing a number of initiatives that would help them remain in their own homes and assist them with rising costs.

Let's talk about Ontario home property tax relief for seniors. The Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act proposes to complete the government's commitment to reduce residential education property taxes. Under this bill, seniors would be eligible for a refund of the residential education portion of the property taxes they currently pay on their principal residence or the unit they rent.

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The program has been designed to be simple and provide education property tax relief to all eligible seniors, regardless of their incomes. It also recognizes that many seniors rely on incomes that are fixed.

We've heard an awful lot about pensions and some of the challenges that some of the pension funds are facing. It's not the first time that this has occurred. There's no doubt that the stock market has been impacted very negatively in the past few years, and consequently, it certainly impacts on the pension funds.

The member across the way was talking about pensions that do not go up. Well, whether it's a federal pension plan or a private pension plan, many benefits are fixed; there's no doubt about it. Some of them are geared to inflation or to the cost of living, but technically, if you're stuck with a pension at \$1,000, probably 10 years later, down the road, it's going to be pretty close to that. Again, I find it very difficult that anyone would vote against a bill that proposes to give somebody a little bit of financial relief.

The new application-based credit would be made available to both senior homeowners and senior tenants. For 2003, seniors who own or rent their home would be eligible for a credit that reimburses their portion of the residential education property tax for the latter half of the year. Starting in 2004, the relief would be based on the full year's residential education property tax paid. We estimate that this measure would provide \$450 million a year in new benefits. That would be an average annual net saving of \$475 for 945,000 senior households.

The government proposes to provide this new relief program in addition to the existing Ontario tax credits for seniors. Seniors would still be able to claim the property tax credit, but only on the portion not already credited through the proposed new Ontario home property tax relief for seniors program.

The program would require that seniors complete an application form. Once the application is processed, eligible seniors would be fully reimbursed for the residential education tax paid for the period after July 1, 2003. Pending approval of the Legislature, the delivery of the cheques under this new program would likely begin in December 2003.

The province is committed to reducing education property tax burdens on residential and business taxpayers. The province is also committed to reducing education property taxes by more than \$1 billion by 2005. As a matter of fact, with the proposed new Ontario home property tax relief for seniors program, property tax burdens would be reduced by a total of over \$1.2 billion by 2005.

Property taxpayers are already saving more than \$650 million due to the business and residential education property tax cuts to date. With the proposed Ontario home property tax relief for seniors program, these savings would rise to more than \$875 million this year.

To further ensure that all Ontario taxpayers benefit from the education tax cuts, following the 2003 reassessment the province lowered education property tax rates to offset any potential increases resulting from rising property values.

This new relief measure for seniors will not affect our education funding. Even while continuing to cut education property taxes in 2003-04, the government committed more than \$15.3 billion in funding to strengthen the education system. Spending on public education is expected to increase to \$16.2 billion for the year 2005-06, more than education spending under any previous provincial government.

Together with the personal income tax age credit, additional support for seniors through the Ontario property and sales tax credit and the benefit from Ontario's personal income tax cuts, this new property tax relief initiative would mean \$2.5 billion in tax savings per year to our seniors.

The ongoing contributions of Ontario's seniors continue to support Ontario's success and prosperity. I think we've acknowledged that recently with the introduction of the bill whereby, at age 65, if you're not ready to retire, you're not forced to retire. I think this type of legislation was long overdue.

As a group, however, senior citizens have lower average incomes than the population as a whole and many rely on fixed incomes. That's why I find it very difficult that anyone in this House would vote against a bill of this nature, to provide additional funding for vulnerable people like seniors who live on fixed incomes and pensions that may not be geared to the cost of living or inflation.

Ontario's personal income tax system already provides significant recognition for these different groups through a variety of tax credits. Ontario's age credit, for example, will deliver more than \$200 million in tax savings this year to low- and moderate-income seniors. Ontario property and sales tax credits provide enriched benefits for seniors that deliver an additional \$300 million in income-tax-based support to seniors and their families. Seniors are also saving \$1.6 billion this year as a result of Ontario's tax cuts to date.

In addition, we are committed to helping seniors in other ways. Exempting life leases from land transfer tax is another measure introduced in the 2003 budget to give

seniors a broader range of housing options. I must point out that life leases are getting popular not only in Toronto but in rural Ontario. In my own community of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, many groups are initiating this type of housing. It's good housing, it's affordable housing, and we need to give seniors all the help they can with this type of housing.

A life lease is a 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 lease projects are mostly sponsored by religious and charitable groups and provide a sense of community for seniors in the complex. Life lease transactions that will qualify for the exemption are those agreements between a registered charity under the federal Income Tax Act or a non-profit organization as specified in the regulation, and the purchaser of the life lease.

In recognizing the unique nature of life leases, the government will exempt from land transfer tax life leases that are sponsored by registered charities or non-profit organizations. The exemption will be retroactive to when land transfer tax was applied to the unregistered property. We expect this measure to provide an average savings of \$1,500 per unit.

I would dare seniors who live in every riding in Ontario to call the office of every member of provincial Parliament tomorrow and find out, especially if they live in a life lease unit, whether they want their rebate back. It would be interesting to have a poll and see how many say they don't want their rebate back.

As I've said before, our government is concerned that the needs of seniors are met. Our vision is to have in place all the support that seniors require to live safely and with dignity. As such, our measures in the 2003 Ontario budget are broad-based to assist seniors in many areas.

We propose improvements to the credits supporting individuals with disabilities and family caregivers, effective January 1, 2003. Recent research from Health Canada indicates that the majority of family caregivers are women and 25% are seniors. Health Canada also found that close to half of these caregivers incur out-of-pocket expenses to care for their family members. By improving tax support for people with disabilities and family caregivers who look after infirm parents, spouses and other dependent relatives, we would be providing annual benefits of \$50 million to about 165,000 people.

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Currently Ontario's tax system provides assistance to individuals with disabilities and people who care for disabled or infirm family members. This assistance is provided through a number of non-refundable tax credits, including the disability credit, the caregiver credit and the infirm dependant credit. However, the care provided by individuals for an infirm spouse or common-law partner goes unrecognized by the current income tax system, as do the efforts of adult children to have their infirm parents or grandparents with modest incomes remain in their own homes.

This government is proposing three enhancements to these credits effective January 1, 2003. First, the amounts on which these tax credits are based would be increased to \$6,637. Second, the government proposes to expand the caregiver credit and the infirm dependant credit to include spouses or common-law partners who are dependent by reason of mental or physical infirmity and to provide support to more caregivers living apart from dependent relatives. Third, the dependant's income level at which their caregiver credit and infirm dependant credit are reduced would be raised to \$13,050, and both credits would be eliminated when the dependant's income reaches \$19,687. This increased tax support would provide average savings of about \$300 each to 165,000 caregivers and people with disabilities. The government is also proposing to work with the federal government and representatives for caregivers and the disabled community to simplify the existing array of personal income tax supports for these individuals and to provide overall enriched benefits through the income tax system.

Another initiative for seniors that I would like to point out is that the province proposes to provide \$10 million annually to give seniors and others access to 15,000 cataract surgeries each year. Cataract surgery is the most commonly performed surgical procedure in North America. As the population ages, the demand for cataract surgery will also increase. This government's proactive approach to addressing the waiting time will have a positive effect on thousands of Ontarians whose sight is affected by cataracts. Many seniors and others whose sight is affected by cataracts will be able to continue leading independent lives with the gift of sight.

Osteoporosis is another disease that strikes too many of our seniors. Osteoporosis is the thinning of bones, which decreases bone strength, making them more fragile and likely to break. To fight this disease, the government plans to invest \$7 million annually to develop and implement a comprehensive osteoporosis action plan to improve the prevention, management and treatment of osteoporosis. The Ontario Women's Health Council has indicated that hip fractures related to osteoporosis are a serious problem in older adults, resulting in death in up to 20% of cases and disability in up to 50% of those who survive.

An estimated 530,000 Ontarians are affected by osteoporosis, including one in four women and one in eight men over 50. Osteoporosis costs Ontario over \$400 million per year for treatment and care. Given the increasing proportion of older people in the population, improving prevention, detection and diagnosis and improving access to effective therapies will benefit both seniors and the government.

Apart from the new initiatives I mentioned, the government's commitment to seniors is also sustained through continued funding to maintain existing programs and services. We plan an increase of about \$400 million to enhance supports for residents in long-term-care facilities and to continue the expansion of long-term-care

beds. Our government's multi-year long-term-care investment plan is the biggest health care investment in Canadian history. Through this investment plan, the province is bringing 20,000 long-term-care beds on stream by the end of 2004 and is renovating up to 16,000 beds to bring them up to standard.

In September 1999, the province announced that Canada's first comprehensive provincial strategy was in place to combat Alzheimer's disease. We have allocated \$68.4 million over five years to Ontario's strategy for Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. The strategy's 10 initiatives are designed to respond to the needs of people with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, their caregivers and their families. For example, as part of our Alzheimer's strategy, in March 2002 we produced a guide to advanced care planning, an Alzheimer's strategy initiative that demonstrates our government's commitment to ensuring that people afflicted with this terrible disease have choices and a sense of confidence that their wishes about their future care will be understood and respected by loved ones and health care professionals.

Seniors have earned our gratitude and the right to a safe and secure retirement. What better way to repay them than ensuring these rights through the property tax measures contained in this bill? Again, I challenge the seniors who might be listening tonight to call their MPP's office tomorrow to make sure they know how to apply for them. I know that some day members of Parliament will find it very difficult to support seniors, but I urge all seniors to call their member's office tomorrow morning and get their applications.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I'm pleased to enter this debate. I've been working hard on issues that are of interest to seniors in my riding, and indeed those same issues fall across this great province of ours. One of the issues that came to my office from many persons—and in this case I'm speaking about seniors—was the question of why retroactive gas charges from two years ago were allowed to occur in my region of the province. Seniors called my office, and they were crying on the telephone wondering why the government would allow a retroactive charge of this magnitude from two years prior to be introduced on their natural gas bills. They were literally crying on the phone, wondering how they were going to be able to pay these bills. They wondered who was protecting them from retroactive gas charges from some two years ago, added on to an already high bill they were paying at the current time.

They called and asked me why their parents—I assume their parents were quite aged, because we were talking to seniors at the time—were only getting one bath a week in a nursing home. I had many, many calls wondering who was protecting their parents in a nursing home. They were also wondering why the fees in that nursing home were going up 15% and how they were going to provide for themselves in the future. They wondered who was protecting them from high gasoline

prices. I had many calls on that issue. These people were also saying to me that they did not have a pension from the workplace; they depended only on the government pension. They were wondering how on earth they were going to make ends meet.

Ms Martel: I want to focus on the comment the member made that the property tax credit would benefit vulnerable seniors, and how can you be against that—if only that were true. The fact of the matter is that there is already a property tax credit for low-income seniors to ensure that those low-income seniors can remain in their own homes. That property tax credit that was already in existence is capped to ensure that the money goes to those seniors who really need it.

Now the government is proposing to remove the cap, so we're going to pay property taxes for the well-to-do and the well-off who don't need it and shouldn't get it at all. I say to people who are watching tonight: tell me about these vulnerable Ontarians. Cable television magnate Ted Rogers and his wife, Loretta, will see the tax bill on their \$5.5-million Toronto home reduced by more than \$23,000 annually. Media tycoon Ken Thomson and Barrick Gold founder and chairman Peter Munk, with both of those having homes assessed at about \$5.3 million respectively here in Toronto, are each going to pay about \$22,500 less in property taxes on this proposal. The annual property taxes on the \$3.6-million home of former Lieutenant Governor Hal Jackman will decline by about \$15,000, while singer Gordon Lightfoot is going to save nearly \$17,000 on his \$4-million Toronto home once he turns 65.

I ask people who are watching out there, does that sound like vulnerable seniors to you? Does that sound like seniors who really need a break on their property taxes? The answer is, absolutely not. If the government really wanted to help vulnerable seniors, they would keep in place the existing tax credit, which does ensure that money goes to low-income seniors.

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Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture): I'd like to congratulate my colleague the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex for his speech.

Yesterday I had the fortune to be at the 90th birthday party for Carman Lewis, who is quite a well-known person in Markham. About 200 people went through his reception, mainly seniors. These are the people we are trying to help. I'll tell you a little bit about Carman Lewis while I have the floor.

Carman originally was a farmer; he had a dairy farm. Then he moved from that. At one point in time he had a pharmacy. He also would, in the middle of winter, go out and saw ice out of the mill pond in Markham. He would store it on his farm and would deliver it in the summertime when people needed ice in those days. He also went into the stationery business at one point in time. So Carman has done a number of things.

Let me tell you something else about Carman Lewis. Carman is also a Markham Lion, as am I. But Carman

was one of the original founding members of the Lions Club in Markham and well acknowledged for his many deeds and contributions to our community in Markham. He has also been inaugurated into the Markham Seniors Hall of Fame. Carman has done so many things, and there are many stories about him, but I will tell you about his family as well. They are getting older too, many of them seniors as well who will benefit from the seniors' property tax relief. But his nephew, John Webster, is well known to many people because John Webster is the North American town crier champion. He certainly was there and emceeding the event. Everyone who was there—there were seniors who had been around town for 50 or 60 years, and all of them, of course, will benefit from this tax relief.

This is what we're doing it for: the ordinary seniors in my community and your community, Speaker, and every community within the Legislature. That's the whole intent. We owe so much to seniors across this province, and it's about time we said thank you to them.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I do want to reference the statement made by the member from the government who suggested that perhaps members on this side of the House don't care about seniors. I care very much about seniors, and I've been listening very carefully to seniors in my riding.

I have here this evening a letter written by a senior. She writes to me,

"Dear Leona:

"I recently received a letter from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care stating my husband's cost for his stay" at the local nursing home "is once again increasing. When he entered [in] February 2003 I understood it had recently been increased. He states in his letter," meaning the minister, "that the increase ... is based on our pension increases.

"Between my husband and I we get" a \$5-a-month increase in their pension.

This constituent writes to me that her husband's annual income is \$17,969, and her annual income is \$16,479. She further states that it takes all of his income and some of hers to pay for his stay in the nursing home. "I have a house and car to keep up." By the way, the husband is 85 and the wife is 82. "I have a house and car to keep up as I have to drive to Selby to see my husband." Her son helps her out with this.

She says, "It's ironic that people over 80 years old have to skimp to live." We know that with Bill 43 these people will be eligible for perhaps \$20 a month in a tax rebate—\$20 a month. I would suggest that is not going to assist this family significantly.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex now has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr Beaubien: I would like to thank my colleagues from Chatham-Kent Essex, Nickel Belt, Markham, and Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

With regard to the comment made by the last speaker, I would like to have that person's name and address so

that maybe I can be in touch with her, because basically this is the perfect program that will help this person to maintain a standard of living that would provide some dignity in the future.

With regard to protecting parents in nursing homes, as I pointed out in my opening statement, I have a father who is 92 years old who has been confined to a nursing home for 13 years. I'm there every week to make sure he has proper care. That's my responsibility.

With regard to a comment by the speaker from Nickel Belt, household income is less than \$25,000 a year in 49% of seniors' households. So we can pick out the Ted Rogers of the world who live in \$7-million mansions, but 49% of seniors in this province live on less than \$25,000 a year. When we break it to \$25,000 to \$50,000 a year, it's another 33%, so that's 82% of the seniors in this province who live on incomes of less than \$50,000. Then if we break it to \$50,000 to \$75,000, it's another 11%. So the large majority of seniors in this province live with incomes of less than \$75,000, and when we look at \$50,000, it's 82% of the seniors in this province.

For anyone who has the audacity to say that this is not helping seniors with low incomes—of course I agree that there are some people who are going to benefit, but they are few and far between. After all, government programs are there to look after the masses in the province, and that's exactly what this program is going to do.

The Acting Speaker: The House will know that by prior agreement the official opposition was allowed to stand down their leadoff debate. It is now time in rotation for that debate, and I look to the member for Kingston and the Islands to lead off that debate.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): This is our leadoff speech on this issue, and I'll be sharing my time with the member from Essex and the member from York West.

I was listening to the debate a bit earlier, and it's kind of interesting that the Conservatives would like everyone to believe that it's a very simple question: "Do you want seniors to get a rebate or don't you want them to get a rebate?" Of course, we know the issue and the question are much more complicated than that. It is not, should all seniors get a rebate? The question is, how should the money for the rebate be extended and expended among the senior citizens of our province? That's the real issue. But I'll get to that in a few minutes.

First of all, I'd like to pay tribute to all the seniors in Ontario, because this is Seniors' Month and we all know that seniors have contributed an awful lot to this province over the years and that we, our generation and the generations to come, are really the beneficiaries of that. When you look at the general quality of life that we enjoy compared to the quality of life that was around 40, 50 or 70 years ago, we can certainly say that the vast majority of Ontarians live in a healthier society and are much better off. I think the seniors of this province have an awful lot to do with that. They are the people who created the society that we live in today.

This is also a perfect opportunity for me to congratulate the Kingston Seniors Centre, which was officially opened this past Friday. It's in a converted school, a one-storey school which as a matter of fact is located right on the street where I was raised and where my parents lived until fairly recently—Francis Street in Kingston. They lived there for about 50 years. It's a one-level school and it's the perfect use for a property that was no longer needed for school purposes that has now been turned into a seniors' centre.

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I had the opportunity to be there with many other people, including the Honourable Flora MacDonald, who of course is well known in the Kingston area and who, as a matter of fact, was the official opener of the centre this past Friday. It is a centre that is being utilized to the fullest extent. When you look at all the activities that take place in that building—it has been open unofficially for about a year or so—it has just been amazing as to what that facility has done for our community. I would just like to pay tribute to them, because they certainly got together, they raised about \$800,000 over the last two years, and they built an absolutely exemplary senior citizens' centre.

Getting back to this particular issue, it's interesting how government members would like to portray this issue as if it is just a question of, "Are you against senior citizens getting money back from the government?" Of course the first thing you have to realize is that with the kind of rebate we're talking about here, we're looking at somewhere around \$450 million that will either come out of the public purse or will not be available for other much-needed programs.

It's our argument on this side of the House that, yes, we should do whatever we can for seniors, but we should be doing it for those seniors who need it, whose physical or financial economic circumstances dictate that something has to be done to help those individuals. As has already been mentioned earlier today in the debate, to give a tax credit to Ted Rogers of \$23,500, Ken Thomson of \$22,500, Peter Munk of another \$17,000 or \$18,000, Gordon Lightfoot of \$17,000, or Hal Jackman of \$15,000 is not the best way to spend taxpayers' money. Quite frankly, those people don't need it. If the government had really wanted to go along this route of giving people a rebate, then why didn't it simply use the Ontario property tax credit system that's already been in effect for, what, some 15 or 20 years? That is a system in which the people who have the least amount of taxable income annually get the greatest benefits. They could have easily topped up that particular program. If you earn money above a certain amount, and it's probably around \$50,000 or \$60,000 nowadays, you would not get anything under that property tax credit system. Why didn't they do that?

We all know why they didn't do that. They wanted to get some sort of a political advantage on the other parties. They wanted to, in effect, buy their votes in an indirect sort of way, or maybe in a very direct way. That's the only possible way to look at it. It's a very attractive

proposition to some seniors who, in the initial instance, may very well say, "My gosh, you know, if I live in a \$200,000-valued house and I'm going to get a \$700 cheque from the government or \$670, that's pretty attractive."

But I also know, in talking to an awful lot of senior citizens in my community over the last month or so, when you talk to them at any length and tell them that this money could be available for better nursing home care, to raise the individual standards for personal and nursing care in nursing homes so that we're no longer at the bottom of the heap, as we currently are, or if we could really build a good community care system whereby there's enough money in the system so that people can stay in their own homes as long as possible before they have to go into an institution such as a long-term-care facility or a home for the aged, the vast majority of seniors I've spoken to have said to me, "Look, that's where our priority should be."

That is the entire issue, as far as I'm concerned. It's a question of how you're going to spend \$450 million that the government is proposing to send out in cheques. How is that best spent for the senior citizens who need it the most? I maintain it's needed for those individuals who have either physical or mental ailments or economic problems or people who simply aren't as well off. It is not a program that should have just gone clear across the board, with those people who live in the more expensive homes gaining by far and away the most amount of money out of this system. By the way, the way the government has set up the system now, whereby in effect you have to apply for it and then you get a cheque back from the government—and I'm sure that will happen just before the next election; that's undoubtedly how it will happen—is going to cost the treasury, according to the *National Post*, \$15 million.

It's interesting. Last Wednesday, I was at the estimates committee and that same question was asked by both the member from Scarborough-Agincourt and myself of the Minister of Finance and the various officials as to how much it was going to cost, and they denied that there was going to be any cost to it at all. Basically they were involved in administering so many different programs that there were no extra costs involved in delivering or sending out almost a million cheques. Of course, nobody in the room there really believed it, but that's actually in Hansard.

Well, I guess the truth has come out now. According to this article that was in the paper today, it's going to cost \$15 million, and that makes sense. It's going to cost money to send cheques out from the government. It's only a minor matter. We're just wondering if that money is really being expended in the best possible fashion.

The letter that I found extremely interesting was one that was a release—I guess it wasn't a letter; yes, it's an open letter to Premier Ernie Eves that was released by CARP, the Canadian Association of Retired Persons. It's well known, and their magazine is well known in this province. Their response to the budget of March 28 was

kind of interesting. I'll just read most of the letter to you, because you would think this organization would be all in favour of the senior tax credit. But I'll just read this to you. It starts off by saying, "The budget announced yesterday is an insult to the intelligence and well-being of most Ontario seniors." Now, that is a very tough and hard-hitting statement for any organization to make. We get lots of news releases etc from all sorts of different organizations, but for one of the leading senior citizens' associations in this country to say that it's an insult to the intelligence and well-being of most Ontario seniors, I think, is a very condemning statement as far as how they feel about this government's activity.

It goes on to say, "How does this budget help the women we have heard from who are paying as much as 80% of their low annual income on rent?" I suppose the argument would be "Well, they'll get \$200 or \$300." That's what the argument from the government side would be, because there is also a rental component to this. They'd certainly be at the lower end of the scale.

It goes on further to say, "And those who have contacted us about their property taxes going through the roof because of current value assessment by well over the amount of the reimbursement being offered?"

"Or the thousands of family caregivers who had to leave work to provide home care for elderly, frail parents or spouses? Many of them have no income, are therefore not paying taxes and are, therefore, not eligible for a tax credit." Actually, I don't think that's 100% correct. Well, I guess they're not eligible for the tax credit that's based on the income tax system; that's correct.

The news release from CARP goes further to say, "As you can see, the budget actually raises a lot of questions when it comes to benefiting seniors.

"Moreover, where is the reference to Ottawa's new funding for affordable housing—or home and community care? Ontarians want to know how Queen's Park is spending this money.

"And, where is the reference to restoring promised, but frozen, money by Queen's Park for home and community care? Why is Queen's Park choosing to ignore the crisis facing home and community care services?"

"Tax credits do not benefit low- and fixed-income seniors and, in any case, do not provide a necessary cash flow to pay for essentials such as rent and food. Let's not forget the growing number of seniors going to food banks. Why is Queen's park ignoring poverty among seniors?"

"Reimbursements for education taxes are welcome, of course, but at what expense to younger Ontarians?..."

"Premier, CARP demands a meeting with you as soon as possible for clarification and discussion on how this budget" was put together, etc.

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I should say that CARP has over 400,000 members across the country, and its mission is to promote the rights and quality of life for mature Canadians. That was their take on the budget.

I find what followed after that even more interesting. This is a letter that was sent almost a month after this news release went out. It's another letter to the Premier, dated 17 April.

"Dear Premier:

"The members of the Ontario Home and Community Care Round Table, which represents 1,000,000 Ontarians, was surprised that Queen's Park ignored home and community care in its recent budgetary statement."

Now, first of all, I should tell you who this round table is. I'll just name all of the organizations, because this is a very formidable list. It is comprised of the Alzheimer Society of Ontario, Canadian Home Care Association, Canadian Pensioners Concerned, CareWatch Toronto, Community Care East York, Ontario Community Support Association, Communities for Home Health Care, Ontario Coalition of Senior Citizens Organizations, Ontario Federation of Union Retirees, Ontario Federation of Labour, Ontario Health Coalition, Older Women's Network, Ontario Home Health Care Providers' Association, Retired Teachers of Ontario, United Senior Citizens of Ontario, Volunteer Centre of Ontario, and the Victorian Order of Nurses.

They were all concerned that there was absolutely nothing in this budget dealing with where the real need is, and that's in more and greater provisions for home care.

What does this letter goes on to say? It states, "Home care was a key feature of the First Ministers' accord in February. And the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care highlighted it as its number one strategic priority. Yet there was no mention of this important health care sector in your budgetary statement.

"While we appreciate the health care initiatives in the budgetary statement to serve seniors ... you did not go far enough. A truly 'seniors budget' would have addressed the needs of home and community care in the continuum of health care in Ontario..."

It goes on to say, "When the government froze home and community care funding in 2001-02, it destabilized an already fragile system—with the results that"—just listen to this, and this is just in the province of Ontario:

"—More than 115,000 vulnerable seniors and persons with debilitating diseases have lost services completely."

In other words, these were people that used to get some kind of home care services and no longer get them at all, because there simply isn't enough money in the budgets that various community care access centres have available across the province.

"—The number of hours of service has declined by 30%." We've heard many stories, and I'm sure you have as well, of individuals that may have been able to get four to five hours a week and are now lucky if they get an hour or two per week.

"—Over six million hours of services for home-making, personal support, nursing and therapy services have been cut.

"—Community support agencies continue to struggle to meet the increasing demands of an aging population."

The point is quite simply this: this round table, representing all these different organizations, was pleading with the Premier some three or four weeks after the budget was delivered, "Please do something for the seniors that really need home care and personal care services."

I did an analysis as our party's long-term-care critic, and what's interesting is that the amount of money that is required to put the home care system into a position whereby most of the seniors in the province, such as these 115,000—and of course there could be many others that should have received services that aren't even included in this number, and also with what the associations that are involved in these services felt was necessary or felt had been committed to by this government in the past—and the amount of the shortfall that they came up with was \$227 million. It's kind of interesting. That's about half of the senior citizen tax credit. When you add the other \$200 million that it would take, according to the Ontario Long Term Care Association and the association for non-profit nursing homes in this province, there's about another \$225 million that they feel is required in order to take us from 10th place in the study that was done by Pricewaterhouse some two years ago, which the government funded and paid for. You may recall that in that study the number of nursing hours available for somebody in a nursing home was something like 2.24 hours and the average was something in the neighbourhood of 3.5 hours per day per senior in these homes. In order to accomplish that, it would take about another \$225 million.

The real issue is, is it better to spend the \$450 million and give it to all the seniors in this province, whether they need it or not, or is it better to take that \$450 million and say we are going to create the best home care system that's possible in this province, so that everyone can truly stay in their own home, regardless of whether they need home care because of a chronic care situation or because of a post-acute-care situation; we are going to spend that money on those seniors in their own homes?

What's happening right now, as we all know, is that even if you get home care, the maximum number of hours of home care you can possibly get is 60 hours per month. I can remember asking the Minister of Health at one of the estimates meetings, what happens if somebody needs 70 or 75 hours of care and they cannot pay for the additional 10 to 15 hours themselves? I was told in so many words, "Well, that's too bad." I guess that person, in effect, will end up in an institution. It never made any sense to me then and it still doesn't, because basically what we're saying is that in dollar terms the maximum amount of home care a person is entitled to is something around the range—and this is the absolute maximum; I'm not for a moment suggesting that everybody on home care gets this—of \$1,500 per month.

The interesting thing is that when somebody goes into an institution, they get about \$3,000 a month. It makes sense to me, from an economic viewpoint as well as from a personal satisfaction viewpoint, that you want that

senior to stay in their own home as long as possible. Why do we tell that senior, in effect, "If you need \$1,600 or \$1,700 worth of care, you have to go into an institution," which is going to cost the tax system more than if we were simply willing to top that up?

In our party platform we are saying, very simply, that if you need home care and you're eligible for the home care services that are going to be provided, then we as a society, as a government, are prepared to fund that up to the level it would cost for you to be maintained in a nursing home or long-term-care facility. That may not be the perfect system—there may still be some people who fall through the cracks—but it is much less likely to happen than it is right now. We've all heard horrendous stories of people being cut off and forced into long-term-care facilities, or they certainly get there a lot faster than should be the case.

One of the interesting things the Pricewaterhouse study that the government itself paid for a couple of years ago showed—and we don't hear much about that any more; you certainly never hear a government member talk about it—is a chart that was contained on one of the pages. It talked about the total number of nursing care hours that the average person receives in various states, provinces and other countries. For example, in Saskatchewan, the average senior in a nursing home gets 3.06 hours of care; in Maine, it's 4.4 hours; in Michigan, it's 3.4 hours. In Mississippi—do you know how we used to use Mississippi as sort of an example of the worst of the possible worst in a lot of different areas? Well, they're not, as far as long-term-care homes are concerned, because there a nursing home resident gets 4.2 hours of nursing care per day; South Dakota, three hours; the Netherlands, 3.3 hours. And what is it in Ontario? It's 2.04 hours. We rank absolutely last.

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I want to make it absolutely clear that this is not meant to be an attack on all of those people who are personal care workers, nurses and all the other health care workers who work in our long-term-care homes, because I can tell you they are probably some of the hardest-working people we have in the province of Ontario. They sometimes deal with very difficult situations, with people getting older and frailer and needing more and more care. It seems to me that the way we judge a society ultimately, or the way it is judged, is by how we take care of the most vulnerable in our society, and these people are vulnerable. Many of these people have absolutely no one else to care for them or look after them in any way, shape or form. And yet we are saying—and you may recall they're not even saying they're getting 2.24 hours of nursing care per day. You may recall that about a year or so ago, the government, by regulation, decided to do away with all the time restrictions and basically left it up to the good graces of the home to ensure that people were properly looked after. There's some very general language; the language escapes me right now. The argument was made on the government side, "By putting in 2.24 hours of nursing care per day, in effect that becomes the

standard, and by not having a standard at all, people will probably get more.” The whole argument was a little ridiculous, as far as I’m concerned.

The point is simply this: with people being older in nursing homes, with people being frailer, with people having greater acuity problems than certainly was the case five or 10 years ago—every study indicates that, as a matter of fact—we need more people employed in the nursing homes and homes for the aged so that the people who reside there can be looked after in a proper way.

You may recall that there was a petition that was signed by over 55,000 residents in this province, mainly the residents themselves who live in these homes, or by their family members. Some 55,000 people said at the time, “You need to increase the nursing standards. We need to have greater investments in our nursing homes.” The government turned that around initially—it was just about a year ago today—and they said, “Oh, I guess we need more money. Right. You’re going to pay 15% more. We need another \$230 from you, residents.” Many of these people, of course, have been retired 20 or 25 years, their pensions are about as low as you can get, and for them to come up with an extra \$230 per month was absolutely ludicrous. We started hearing not just from the residents but quite often from the family members, and that was kind of the interesting thing. It wasn’t the residents who complained so much, but it was more the family members, people of my age who were saying, “My golly, is this what awaits us 20 or 25 years down the road?”

Now, give credit where credit is due. The government saw the evil of their own ways and they decided to take the 15% and initially spread it over three years. I guess now, because we’re right before an election, they’re saying, “OK. We’re going to do the right thing. All you have to do is pay the cost of living more than last year. Forget about that.” But you know, that’s not the way you deal with people you truly respect, the kind of people who have made this province what it is today.

But just to deal with the issue as to how much personal care these individuals need—and these are just some facts and figures that people may be interested in—a classification study that was done by the ministry itself showed that of the residents in a typical long-term-care facility, 70% are over 80 and 25% are over 90. I can remember at Rideaucrest Home for the Aged, back some 25 years ago, the average age of the person who lived there was probably about 68 or 70. Now we’re talking about something a heck of a lot closer to 90 years of age—95% of the people who live in these homes.

They used to be homes for the aged; they’re no longer that. They are in effect the 21st-century equivalent of chronic care hospitals. Most of these people need help on a continual basis. About 95% require assistance to get dressed, 94% require some assistance to eat, 89% are incontinent and require bathroom assistance, 63% suffer from dementia, 44% are unable to find their own room and 35% have a neurological disorder. With the funding that was in place at the time this study was done, which

was only last year—and there is a bit more money in the system now; I realize that. The government did come up with \$100 million some time ago. But the funding that was available when this survey was taken only allowed, per resident, four minutes’ assistance to get up, get washed, get dressed and go to the dining room, 10 minutes for assistance with eating and medicines, one bath per week, which we heard so much about over the last six or seven months, and 15 minutes of programming per day.

If you want to do something for senior citizens, surely you’re going to spend the money on the people who truly need it. Surely you’re going to spend it on seniors who either live in nursing homes, so that they can be provided with more personal care, or on individuals who need help in their own homes through community care access, through home care. That’s the issue.

I could be talking about a whole bunch of other issues as well. For example, look at the question of dental hygiene. It’s an issue that no longer even comes up in a nursing home, and yet it’s a well-known fact that many diseases, particularly for the elderly, start with improper dental hygiene. Dental hygienists quite frankly are no longer to be found in most nursing homes because the money for them has dried up.

The same thing applies to physiotherapy. Why don’t we increase the maximum that can be spent on physiotherapy, which, according to schedule 5, I think is \$44 million? Why don’t we increase that? The more activity we give people in nursing homes, the better it is for their total health. Isn’t that where the money should be spent?

I met with a group just a couple of weeks ago that were suffering from rheumatoid arthritis. I was just astounded by the amount of money each of these individuals has to spend, upwards of \$2,000 per month, just to find some relief from the constant aches and pains they suffer from. Many of these people can still get around, so we’re not even talking about people who live in nursing homes or who need home care; we’re talking about people who want to get around and be active but who are in pain most of the time, and it costs up to \$2,000 for them to get the proper medicines. Why aren’t we doing something about that situation?

We’ve all heard about the Visudyne problem, where you basically have to be more than 50% blind, where 50% of your sight is gone, before the government program comes in to help, which to my way of thinking is ludicrous. We should be helping people with eyesight problems right from the beginning.

I want to leave enough time for my colleagues. There are so many other things I could say about this issue, but I want to make it absolutely clear to all seniors who are watching that we wish we could give everybody their money back. I even heard this argument from some younger people: “Well, if you’re going to give money back to seniors because they’re no longer using the schools, I don’t use the health care system; aren’t you going to give me a rebate?”; or “I don’t have a car. Why the heck should I pay for the highways out there?” You can

take that argument further and do it with all sorts of other services that are out there.

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That is not what makes a community. What makes a community is the fact that we're in it together, and those individuals who need help, whether it's help with education programs or health care programs, are the individuals for whom we should be using our shared resources, our shared taxation dollars that come into the system.

We know the plan that's being proposed to us right now is a cynical ploy to curry favour with some seniors out there. Everybody loves a tax cut. I'd like a tax cut too. Who doesn't like a tax cut? The problem is, we can't afford it if we want to live in the society we have created here over the years.

I would simply end by saying this: if we are going to invest \$450 million, let's invest it in the right area. Let's make sure that we spend that money in both the nursing home sector, by providing greater support in personal care and nursing services, and in the community care access centres. That's where the money is required, much more than in the overall tax rebate system that's being proposed here.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I'll be the first to acknowledge that tax cuts are tempting. In fact, this government wants to tempt large, profitable corporations with tax cuts. They want to tempt them with \$2.2 billion worth of tax cuts. They want to tempt them to the point that our corporation taxes in this province would be 25% below the lowest-taxed state in the United States of America.

Interjection.

Mr Crozier: The minister claps, but that's a race for the bottom, Minister.

I believe we live in a caring society. For example, I agree with Ethel Meade, co-chairwoman of the Ontario Coalition of Senior Citizens' Organizations. She said the government is "very uneasy about getting elected again and they think they can appeal to seniors."

This goes on, "While the education property tax break will be attractive to people who have expensive properties, Ms Meade said, 'I find it offensive because to even suggest that seniors have no concern about education is off the wall.'" I agree with her. I think seniors in this province have the dignity to pay their way and contribute to society.

There are a lot of seniors in this province, I'm sure, who don't live in \$200,000 homes. You have to live in a \$200,000 home to get a tax credit of some \$670. There are a lot of seniors who live in housing that costs or is assessed at a lot less than that.

Speaker, you'll no doubt remember with me when then-Treasurer Ernie Eves—now Premier—under the former Premier, Mike Harris, gave out \$200 cheques just before Christmas a few years ago. Do you remember that? And do you remember also how those were scoffed at, saying that money would be much better spent on education, health care, long-term care for our seniors, and

the environment? In any number of ways it would be much better spent.

I think this is a case where rather than giving these tax rebates, mailing out these cheques to the rich in our society who are going to get the huge cheques that count, many seniors would agree that a better way to spend this is to spend it in those areas where our society is in true need.

In fact, Ethel Meade went on to say, "It is a public good that we want to contribute to,' ... noting that the \$450 million in forgone tax revenue could also be used," besides on education, "to improve services in long-term-care facilities," as my colleague from Kingston and the Islands has pointed out.

"Those facilities have the lowest basic standards in the country, she said, pointing an accusing finger at the Tories for eliminating rules that at one time required facilities to have a registered nurse on duty at all times and mandated a minimum of one bath per week for residents."

I think the seniors in this province truly do want to continue to contribute to society. They have; they've worked hard, they've earned their retirement and they've earned retirement in comfort. But we have to understand where the priorities might be. I look at this act and I think of the seniors in our province who very well might have to hire an accountant in order to apply for the rebate, because to receive the payment of the tax credit for a year, the eligible senior must apply to the Minister of Finance for the credit "within two years after the end of the year ... or within such longer period as may be prescribed." What the government is saying is, "Look, we appreciate the fact that it may be difficult to understand how we're going to get this back," unlike the property tax credit that we have now that can simply be done through your income tax.

Again, it was pointed out earlier that this tax credit, this cheque scheme in itself is going to cost \$15 million. Fifteen million dollars is a lot of money; that goes a long way to educating our children and to taking care of our frail and elderly. Because in addition to the \$15 million to administer the rebate, the government also is planning an extensive summer advertising blitz advising all seniors how to obtain and complete the application form. I seem to recall that this was the government that wanted to get rid of red tape. And what are they doing? They're creating massive red tape, in that seniors are going to have to apply, somebody is going to have to handle that application form, somebody is then going to have to make out another form so the cheque can be sent off to somebody—a massive administration expense that really isn't necessary.

If the government really, truly wanted to get bang for its buck, they would make this as simple as could be. In fact, they'd almost make it automatic. But they're not doing that. Oh no, you're going to have to apply for it. You know what happens when there's a requirement that you have to apply for this rebate? They're counting on a number of seniors in this province who won't even know

about it, who won't know how to apply, who won't understand how they apply. That way, the government says, we're helping all these seniors in the province. There will be a significant number of them who won't even know that they have to apply for this.

I want to refer to a couple of other things in the act that are of interest, because it goes to the motive behind this. For example, there's a minimum amount. "If an eligible senior's tax credit for a year, as otherwise calculated under this section, is greater than nil but less than \$10, the amount payable as his or her tax credit for the year is \$10." You know what tells me too? That they expect there's going to be an awful lot of seniors in this province who aren't even going to be eligible for more than 10 bucks or they wouldn't have even had to put that in there. I suspect that the government knows how many are not even going to be eligible for 10 bucks. It's going to cost more than 10 bucks to get their 10 bucks to them. It doesn't make sense. This is the government that wanted to get rid of red tape and it's going to cost them more money to write the cheque than the cheque is going to be worth.

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There are also restrictions, Minister—or Speaker; that's a Freudian slip. "The minister is not required to pay the amount of an eligible senior's tax credit for a year until the minister has received proof, satisfactory to the minister, that the home property tax, rent or other amount in respect of which the tax credit was calculated has been paid." Can you imagine how many bureaucrats are going to have to be involved to determine that every one of these applications has in fact been paid for? I can't imagine how much bureaucratic red tape this is going to cost. I think the \$15-million estimate is far lower than it really should be.

Estimated payments: "The minister may make one or more payments based on an estimate of an eligible senior's tax credit for a year from the consolidated revenue fund if, in the minister's opinion, such conditions as may be prescribed by regulation are satisfied." Can you believe it?

Now we've got another group of, I guess, bureaucratic staff who are going to have to determine whether these payments should be made or whether they should estimate what payment is to be made. It's hard to believe that the government that wanted to take care of all the red tape in this province is setting up a bureaucratic nightmare like this.

Another part of the act that you probably won't hear many of the government members speak about is the minister's right of set-off. "Despite subsection (1)"—whatever that is; I guess that's where you're entitled to this tax rebate—"if an eligible senior who is entitled to a tax credit under this act is liable or is about to become liable to make a payment to the crown in right of Ontario, the minister may apply all or part of the tax credit, including any interest, to reduce the liability, instead of paying it to the eligible senior." Can you believe that?

One thing is that if you owe the government money, they'll keep it. That may be fair. But this says you might even become liable to make a payment to the crown. Who's going to decide that? How's a senior going to understand how somebody decided I might become liable to pay money to the crown? Absolutely ridiculous.

Now we get to the part of the act where the municipalities become involved. Not only is this government going to restrict the ability of municipalities to raise money, by having to have referenda, which this provincial government doesn't require—and when they did require referenda to increase tax, do you know what they did? They just changed the law. That's easy for these guys to do.

It's the same for municipalities. It says, "For the purposes of administering and enforcing this act, the minister may require a municipality to give such information as the minister considers necessary and the municipality shall do so." OK, municipalities, get ready, because these guys are going to foist a lot of this administrative cost on to you: another download. What do they do? They restrict your ability to raise the funds to pay for the download. It's absolutely ridiculous.

It goes into some areas too of privatization, where the government can practically walk into your home and ask for your tax return. Obviously it has to be during certain hours of the day.

I want to conclude with this to folks listening at home, and I want the seniors to listen to this. It's very simple:

"(a) a property tax credit equal to the sum of,

"(i) the lesser of \$500 and the amount calculated using the formula,

"A - B

"in which,

"'A' is the senior's occupancy cost for the taxation year, and

"'B' is the lesser of the amount, if any, received by the senior under the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, 2003 for the taxation year and the amount determined in accordance with the regulations, and

"(ii) the amount calculated using the formula,

"(A - B) × 10%

"in which 'A' and 'B' have the meaning assigned in subclause (i)...."

The bottom line is, I'm going to be a senior in the not-too-distant future. I'm proud to pay for the education of Joan's and my granddaughter, and I think there are lots of seniors in this province who are quite proud to continue to play that role as well.

Mr Sergio: Before I dwell on Bill 43, I would like to put in a plug for one of our own agencies with respect to the Ontario strategy to combat elder abuse, June being Seniors' Month. Seniors are prime targets for scam artists. So much has been said with respect to putting our seniors on guard with respect to elder abuse from scams. But there are still some 60,000 to 150,000 seniors who suffer the consequences.

We may say, "What is elder abuse?" Let me say, especially for the seniors in my area—and I have a very large

seniors' population—that there is recourse, so there should be no seniors who take those abuses and do not report them. Elder abuse is most often defined as an act that harms a senior or jeopardizes his or her health or welfare. Elder abuse can take the form of financial, emotional or physical abuse or neglect. Financial abuse is by far the most common form of elder abuse, followed by emotional and physical abuse and neglect. Elder abuse can take place in the home, in a residential setting or in the community. As I said, it is estimated that between 60,000 and 150,000 Ontario seniors suffer the consequences of elder abuse.

Now let me dwell for a few minutes on Bill 43, which is the much-talked-about property tax rebate for seniors. Let me present a day in the life of my seniors. And if my seniors are like your seniors, then I think we share some common feelings my seniors go through, day in and day out. Who are the seniors in my area? There are those who barely receive the old age pension and Canada pension. There are some who don't get even that, because they were prior to one of the pensions becoming law. That is the only income they receive on a monthly basis.

Who are the seniors talked about so much? Even today we had the Premier lauding the war veterans and survivors, those that gave us freedom, and so forth. But generally, who are our seniors? As I said, if your seniors are like mine, they come from working in the most menial jobs over the past 30, 40 or 50 years. They have done every possible job from construction of sewers and building roads and railways to the asphalt business. That generation is practically gone. That is why we are suffering the consequences today; we don't have those people any more.

Those people have either retired or are collecting a very measly Workers' Compensation Board pension, on which, I should say to the government, they have not received one cent of increase in the last 10 years. I say shame on the government, because the injured workers in Ontario should at minimum be getting their pension combined to the cost of living increases. But they are not. They are still getting the original pension, and, in the last 10 years, they did not receive even a 1% increase.

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The seniors I quoted, day in and day out, get up and, if they can, they will walk to the nearest mall for a walk, if the day is nice; otherwise, they will go to the local community centre when it's open. Do you know what they do in there? They walk in circles. Usually there is a club or two for seniors, which charges something like \$10 to \$15 a year, and 90% of those seniors don't belong because they can't afford that. If they are lucky, at the community centre maybe there is some—what do we call them?—*bocce* playing, a kind of lawn bowling. They can't afford the \$10 membership fee.

I'm speaking of those seniors who don't take one holiday a year or one every two years. They've never been on a holiday. They don't know what it is. I'm talking about those seniors who barely can afford to pay their utility expenses on a monthly basis, if they want to

continue to live in their little home. Most likely, seniors in my area have a semi-detached. That is their castle. They worked all their lives for that and now they feel threatened that they can't afford it any more. Those who still can afford it, have a 10- to 12-year-old car. God forbid a major repair—they dread that happening. The majority of our seniors in my area don't have a car any more. Do you know why? They can't afford the insurance rates any more. They can't afford a car; they can't afford the insurance payments.

That's what we should tell the government here, not the \$20 a month that they may possibly get, let alone the rich people they say will be getting \$10,000, \$12,000, \$15,000 a month because their homes are worth millions of dollars. But if the government really wanted to take into consideration seniors, they would have addressed the seniors of a certain lower income, on fixed incomes, and they would have given a reasonable rebate specifically to address those in need.

On top of that, we are trying to address this \$200 a year. When we say, "We're going to give you a tax rebate," seniors in general say, "Oh, goody, goody. I'm going to get lots of money." Well, don't expect a lot of money. There isn't a lot of money because they don't pay a lot of education tax on their property. So what are they going to get from this government?

Shamefully, since 1995 seniors have been the group most hit, and hit hard, by the government. So they say, "Do you know what? We'll take whatever, but why don't they remove maybe the \$6 copayment on drugs or the first \$100 on drugs? Or instead of penalizing me every year because I don't go on a holiday, I just keep my house nice and clean; I plant some flowers, I keep some hedges"—then, do you know what? The MPAC agency of the municipality, comes and says, "Your house looks nice and clean. It's worth more money," so the taxes go up. They can't win. So we are penalizing those seniors who can't afford to go on a holiday. They can't afford to go to a movie once a month, and we are saying, "Your house looks very nice. It's worth more than your neighbour's," let's say. And they say, "What? What are you talking about? This is what I spend my time on, day in and day out. I look after my front and back yard to make it look nice for the neighbourhood, and you come and penalize me because I improved my house and my neighbourhood?"

Then at the end, when we have those in real need and they can't find any more assistance in their own house and have to go to long-term care or a nursing home, oh my, it's no longer fun. That's the time when the government should be saying, "Do you know what? This is the time when you deserve to be looked after, and looked after properly." It is a shame that now the government refuses to accommodate those people in need, either because of funding or because of accommodation. They are no longer providing any more rooms. They are no longer providing more money to give that assistance. They closed hospitals and they said they were going to create community care access centres, but the community

care access centres say, "Do you know what? They only give us so much money, and once the money is gone, sorry, we can't provide you any more hours per week. So what are we supposed to do?" We are supposed to be the ones that have the answers, and we say, "Well, the government has decided to fund only so much and then, if there is more need, sorry." "Are you saying that I am entitled to only one bath a week?" "Yes." "One hour a week?" "Yes."

Is this the type of care that at this particular time we want to give our seniors? Surely not. I am sure that every member on the government side feels the same way, but because of who they are and because of their—

Mr Gerretsen: What they are.

Mr Sergio: Yes, what they are. This is what they are doing to our most needy group in our community, our seniors.

So we say we'd love to give our seniors a hand up, a tax break, a reduction in their taxes, but not in this particular way. When I say to seniors, "We're going to give you a \$100 reduction, but we're going to take it from your grandson's or granddaughter's education," because that's where it's going to be coming from, they say, "Oh, no, no. I don't want my granddaughter or grandson to be working the sewers and in construction like I did. I want them to have an education." That's what it boils down to. It is a choice, and this government is not giving our seniors a choice. It's giving them what they want to feed to our seniors. I don't think that is acceptable to me, and I don't think it's acceptable to our seniors.

The Acting Speaker: Members now have up to two minutes for questions or comments.

Ms Martel: It's worth reiterating again that there is already an existing tax credit for seniors who need property tax relief, because if you listened to the government members tonight, you would think that there's nothing in place. There already is an existing tax credit. It has a cap on it to ensure that the money goes to those seniors who need it the most, not to millionaires. The scheme that the government proposes will now take the cap off in terms of qualification, so a number of wealthy seniors, who have already been mentioned tonight and whom my colleague from Toronto-Danforth is going to mention again, are now going to get taxpayers' dollars to pay their property taxes. That is wrong.

If the government really wanted to help vulnerable seniors, I'll give you an idea of what the government could do. This government could ensure that seniors and the disabled who are serviced now by the Manitoulin-Sudbury CCAC get the homemaking services they need.

I see the minister is here tonight, and I want to know what he is going to do for some of my constituents; first of all, for the mother of Gloria Rohrbacher of Capreol. Her mom lives in Val Caron. She's 85 years old, with congestive heart failure. The measly 1.5 hours of homemaking that she was receiving from the CCAC is now being cut off, and she can't afford to pay for it privately.

Carmelle Pelletier of Capreol was getting three hours one week and 1.45 hours every second week of home-

making care. They would come in, deal with her bedding, her floors, her bathrooms and do the housekeeping that she needed. The CCAC is going to continue her personal care but cut off everything else. She makes \$10,000 a year. She can't afford private housekeeping.

Paulette Ross of Val Caron uses a wheelchair. She's going to get her homemaking cut off—the laundry, the vacuuming and washing of the floors that was done. She's on ODSP and can't afford it either.

If you've got money for \$450 million for a tax credit that's going to benefit the wealthy, what about helping these seniors who need homemaking care?

2030

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I listened with interest for the entire debate from the members for Kingston and the Islands, Essex and York West. What I found fascinating about their presentations this evening is that not once did they mention what they were prepared to do, should they become government, to help seniors in this province. But if you listen carefully to what they did say, it's clear there are a few decisions they've already made about what they would do.

The first is, they would roll back and cancel this tax rebate system which is before the House this evening. That's \$450 million in the pockets of seniors that the Liberals would take out of their pockets.

Then they've said they would roll back the 20% personal income tax reduction on top of the previous 20% personal tax cut that was brought in by our government over the last eight and a half years. That amounts to close to \$1,000 per year per the average senior in this province. That is what the Liberals would do. And did we hear any of their promises? No, because, not just in the election that Lyn McLeod lost or the last election that Dalton McGuinty lost, there was virtually nothing in their platforms to discuss what they would do for seniors.

Home care: they said they'd study it. Long-term-care beds: no, we don't need any. When they were the government for five years, they didn't build one single long-term-care bed in this province and left it to this government to clean up the \$10-billion overexpenditure of the previous government, and yet we still committed to expanding services for seniors.

The truth is that the Liberals are going to take out of the pockets of Ontarians \$4.2 billion because Liberals, true to their heritage, know how to spend their money. Always trust a Liberal to find a way into your pocket and spend it on your behalf. The truth is that the citizens of Ontario should be spending their own hard-earned money, and we're going to let them do it.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: There was something unparliamentary said here. I heard it very clearly and I would ask you to take it back, please, member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr Gerretsen: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I sat and listened very carefully to the mem-

bers from Kingston and the Islands, Essex and York West. I was touched with the sincerity of their sharing. It was clearly the voice of three very caring and compassionate people who understand that politics, when all is said and done, is about making choices. Martin Luther King said that. Politics is about making choices, about how we distribute good services and opportunities.

We have a whole different set of values when it comes to choices over here and a whole different set of priorities.

I don't know what planet the member from Burlington was from as he was listening to the speeches. He was certainly listening to something very different from what I heard. I heard some genuine caring and compassion coming from the members on this side of the House, who made more sense in their brief moments this evening than members opposite have made in some time when it comes to the issue of seniors.

When the honourable member opposite talks about not knowing what we're going to do, I thought the members here made it very clear: more emphasis on home care; greater investment to make sure nurses are there at 3 am when that bell sounds, that there's actually somebody there to respond; home care standards that make sense; and, together, standing up and trying to build a stronger, more caring and compassionate community, the kind of community the senior citizens I've been privileged to be influenced by, the kinds of values they passed on to a generation of people, many of whom are in this House and want to build that stronger community.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): The question we have to be asking ourselves tonight—and this has been pointed out by the member for Nickel Belt and others—is, do Ted Rogers and his wife, Loretta, need to see another \$23,000 in their pocket back from the public purse? Do media tycoon Ken Thomson and Barrick Gold founder and chairman Peter Munk need to see another \$22,500 less in property taxes out of the public purse? Does Hal Jackman need to get another \$15,000 or so back, with his millions of dollars? Does Gordon Lightfoot need to get \$17,000 back on his \$4-million Toronto home?

Speaking of Gordon Lightfoot, I do want to take this opportunity to wish him well. I'm a great fan of Gordon Lightfoot. He's a great Canadian, a great singer, a great songwriter, and we were all very worried when he went into hospital and became ill. I only met Mr Lightfoot once, and I'm sure he wouldn't remember me, but I remember him. I would be surprised if he supported this, because he's a man who just went through a very serious illness and was in the hospital and was taken care of by very good nurses and doctors and other caregivers who went through our very fine education system.

That's an example right there of why we should all be helping pay for our education system, because we all end up as patients at some time or other and need these well-educated people taking care of us. We all have grandchildren. If you don't, you probably will. I'm a proud grandmother, and I want to be able to contribute to my

three grandchildren's education. That's James, Savanna and Kerin, for the record. It's my responsibility to make sure that they are good citizens and they get a good education.

The Acting Speaker: Now one of the two original debaters may respond. I see the member for Kingston and the Islands on his feet. You now have the floor.

Mr Gerretsen: I would like to first of all thank all the members for their responses and my two colleagues for being involved in the presentation tonight. I say to the member from Burlington, who was here during the entire hour that the three of us took, that I thought I made it quite clear, that I talked about the people of Ontario and the government having choices. Your choice is apparently to give \$450 million back in tax rebates, with most of it going to the people who really don't need the money. Our choice is to take that \$450 million and to put \$225 million of that into home care, where it's much needed. We all know of services that have been cut, and we all know of organizations that have literally had to shut down—in Hamilton during the summer last summer, the VON in Kingston and in other places as well—because home care is no longer available through those services.

The other \$225 million will go to be spent on the 60,000 Ontarians who currently live in nursing homes, in homes for the aged and in other for-profit nursing homes out there right now. That's our priority. Our priority is to spend it on the seniors who need the services and not on the individuals who don't need it. Would we like to give a tax rebate to everyone? Obviously. But it seems clear to us that if we really want to build the compassionate society that we have traditionally had in this province, it's absolutely necessary that we make those kinds of investments in home care and in the nursing homes of this province.

The Acting Speaker: The floor is now open for further debate.

Mr Jackson: I am pleased to be able to rise this evening and speak on Bill 43, Ontario's home property tax relief for seniors. As has been relayed earlier, June is Seniors' Month, and just this last week, of course, and today in the House we acknowledged the efforts of veterans and their performance in the European campaign to liberate Europe. So this is a very significant month and a significant time of the year for us to be discussing a very important issue, and that is how the government encourages seniors to live with dignity and comfort in their elder years.

Much has been said in this debate so far this evening. My colleague the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex did an excellent job setting out all the fine points that are contained within this legislation.

2040

I want to cover a couple of new areas that have not been discussed so far in this debate. I'm going to hearken back to two experiences. One involves my mother, because it will be 24 years this September that my father passed away. My mother had two of my eight brothers and sisters still living at home. My dad died passed away

without insurance, without a whole lot. I remember him telling me just before he left that he hadn't really prepared our mother to become a widow. I was in public office at that time but not here at Queen's Park, obviously.

I realized just how vulnerable seniors can become, not through any singular effort or failure on their own part, and that all of us in this House have a responsibility to try to better understand the seniors' value system, to listen to them to determine what constitutes, for them, independence. A lot of that has to do with where they live, whether they can still drive a car, and so and so forth, and a lot has to do with whether they can interact with the rest of their family members to determine their quality of life.

I feel very strongly about this bill. Many of the seniors in this province are living alone, unfortunately, because they are widows or widowers. Many want to continue to maintain their home, not just because it's their home but because it's surrounded by memories, it's surrounded by their friends and neighbours, and also because it gives them a sense of independence.

When I go back 27 years ago, when I was first elected as a school trustee, at the first door I knocked on—and I'll never forget it because it was the first door I knocked on—was a senior citizen who said, "Cam, I don't know why you're wasting your time trying to talk to me about being a trustee on the school board. Those individuals spend my money like drunken sailors—my taxes are going up way too much for education—and not at the city and not at the region. So why are you wasting your time standing on my doorway? Nobody ever considers us when they're spending our money. My kids haven't been in school for 35 years and I continue to pay."

This government understood that and did a series of reforms that, in effect, put a cap on the ability of trustees to spend. It didn't put a cap on what we transfer to school boards, as has already been alluded to. We're paying more today than we have ever in the history of the province: \$15.3 billion. That doesn't even include the \$1 billion-plus we put into the teachers' pension fund on behalf of all taxpayers in the province. The fact of the matter is that many seniors question why their property taxes have been going up.

It's interesting that two out of the three Liberal speakers are persons who held public office on the municipal side. They remember those years when the education portion went up 14%, the city or county would go up at 4%, they'd have to bring in a blended tax increase of 7.5%, and the mayor or the reeve would take all the heat in the community, when in fact it was the education portion that was rising—in the wake of declining enrolments.

We made a promise and we kept that promise, that we would not only make sure that the education portion of your taxes got under control, but we also said, "We want to take this form of a wealth tax off the property." We did so and we did so successfully. Now we're honouring part

of that commitment which was to reduce more of the education portion. It shouldn't be based on a wealth tax.

Ms Churley is in the House today. She will remember when Toronto received not a single penny of provincial tax revenue because it had this hugely rich assessment in Toronto to fund its educational system. It was hardly fair to communities all across Ontario that didn't have that rich assessment base or all these people paying property taxes upon which to draw.

Today we have a standard funding model that allows for equity across the entire province. The province makes that commitment from its income taxes, its corporate taxes, its gasoline taxes and so on, not off its property tax.

One of the reasons I like this piece of legislation is that it acknowledges that seniors want to stay in their homes and live there independently. You can't punish a senior because their life's investment is locked up in their home, and yet they are so-called cash-poor but home-rich. The only way we can allow them to continue to live there is if we have some system of deferral or rebate for their property taxes, and this legislation achieves that.

That's why I'm pleased to support it. There are so many seniors who will benefit from this. I listened carefully to the Liberals as they commented earlier today, and I'm very concerned for seniors in the province if they ever get elected. I'm concerned because of their past record, whether it was on rent control, with their RCCI-BOCI formula that saw some buildings, predominantly seniors' buildings in my riding of Burlington, with rent increases of 35% and 40%—the NDP had to come in and clean that up—or to see them promise 140 new chronic care beds in our community, only to have 75 cut. The only government to cut hospital beds in my community was the Liberal government.

Interjection.

Mr Jackson: Across the province, it was more in the order of 4,500, but in my own community, they promised more beds and then took our existing ones away.

I'm very concerned for seniors as to what this so-called Liberal government-in-waiting says they will do. I've alluded to it earlier. They're going to roll back the 20% personal income tax cut and the further 20% that we're committed to implementing right away. We know that 90,000 seniors in this province pay federal income taxes but no provincial taxes. That is a result of the work of this government. So they're going to roll that back so that people like my mother are going to have to pay more on their meagre incomes, because my father had a veteran's pension but no other pension income, and that's what my mother has to live on, that and her Canada pension. She has a very difficult time. Now the Liberals are proposing to not only take away this tax credit on their property but also to add to their income taxes. Those are just two of the taxes they're purporting to roll back that will adversely affect seniors in this province.

I want to dispel the notion that some people are conveying, that somehow there's going to be less money spent on education. This is an absolute fallacy, and it's

inappropriate to even suggest it. The commitment from the government is consistent. It has been pledged that we will continue to increase money for our publicly funded school systems, and we're doing that on target with the Rozanski report.

On health care—I wish I had a few more minutes, but I wanted to comment—tonight we've heard a lot of discussion about home care and long-term care. I reiterate, regardless of what the member for Kingston and the Islands says he'd like to spend the money on, the truth is that the Liberals have not pledged to do anything other than what we've already done this year, which is to pay the cost-of-living increase for nursing homes. They're dead silent, other than setting standards, but they're not prepared to increase funding for home care, and not once in the debate did they comment on the fact that these are health care programs that are not covered under the Canada Health Act. When Paul Martin Sr brought in the Canada Health Act, he was dead silent on the needs of seniors: no national drug plan, no national home care plan and no national nursing home plan. All three have been promised by three different budgets of the federal Liberal government, and we've received nothing. We've heard nothing from the Liberals about how we should go and get those monies for seniors in Ontario from the Canada Health Act. It's time seniors were recognized by the federal government.

Mr Crozier: I really find it strange that the member from Burlington would venture into the land of spending like drunken sailors. We know, for example, that this government spends \$75,000 an hour, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year on consultants. We know that they've spent somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$500 million on self-serving advertising. And he talks about somebody spending like a drunken sailor? You've got to be kidding.

2050

We also are concerned about our senior citizens. We just see it a different way. He talked about somebody being house-rich and tax-poor, or something like that. As I said earlier, out where I come from, there aren't a lot of senior citizens who live in \$200,000 homes; they live in very modest accommodations. I say to the member, that's why I brought up the fact that there are a lot of seniors out there—maybe not all of them; I don't know which group you're appealing to—who still feel a social conscience and want to contribute to other areas of society, ie the education of their grandchildren or the health care of their fellow citizens. I don't think it's fair to paint them all with the same brush.

He mentioned that we, as Liberals, are going to roll back the personal income tax credit. I don't think so. Corporation tax, \$2.5 billion in corporation tax? Absolutely.

Ms Churley: I must agree with the member for Burlington that the Liberals do continually promise to spend the money that they're going to claw back, money that the Tories put out there on their promises, but, as in

this case, the money hasn't been spent yet. I acknowledge that that's an issue.

Mr Speaker, I don't know how you feel—you're in the chair; you have to be neutral tonight—but I've got to tell you that I find this debate really sad, really depressing, frankly, that we're standing here in different parties using seniors as a political football before an election. I find it really distressing, because we all know it's a hot-button issue. I can guarantee you, with an election coming, that we're going to get ready for those ads over the summer, and get ready for the cheques to start flowing, because the complicated way the government plans to do this is not through filling in a form in your income tax, but it's through filling in an application form—there are some whose first language is not English and some others may not even fill it in—that gets to the government so they can send that cheque individually to each senior. Now, you tell me what this is really all about. That's why I find it so distressing.

Look, I want to say directly to the member from Burlington that this isn't about his mother. There is already, and read my lips, a seniors' tax credit which has an income cap that makes it possible for those on lower incomes who need the help to get it. If we need to improve on that, let's improve on it for those who need it. But please, don't stand there and give me this, that rich seniors in this province need this kind of break at this time when our education system is screaming for more money.

Mr Wettlaufer: I want to comment on the member from Burlington. I have heard him speak many times about a number of issues, and he is always very dedicated to those issues. But I don't think I've ever heard him speaking so passionately about anything except when he is speaking about seniors.

He was the minister for seniors, as we all know in this House. I had a couple of seniors' seminars in my riding at which he spoke. I have to tell you, nobody in this House can claim to care more about seniors than he does.

What he says is the absolute truth. We're talking about seniors, not just the few whom the members opposite like to quote, who may benefit to a great extent from the seniors' tax credit, but the vast majority of seniors who are in the lower-income realm, the low-middle-income realm, who own houses. The member from Essex said they don't have \$200,000 homes in his riding. Well, in my riding, that's the average cost of a home. For a senior, that's a rather substantial investment.

But we're also talking about seniors who rent, and \$475 or \$575 or \$1,000—whatever—does help them immeasurably in the cost of their rent.

For those who happen to own a \$180,000 or \$200,000 house, their taxes are probably in the area of \$2,000 to \$3,000 a year, and now the members opposite want them to pay all the taxes. They don't want them to have any break at all from the provincial government, even though they know that money is not coming out of the education system but we are in fact putting it back in.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I rise to comment briefly on what the member from Burlington said. I don't doubt his sincerity at all, but government is all about making the right choice. Government is all about looking at a situation and ensuring that there is balance and fairness.

I guess this is where this Bill 43 is flawed. How can you possibly think that it's fair for Ted Rogers to receive approximately an additional \$18,000 a year in a tax rebate when you have somebody like Pat Jones, Pauline Ross, Marion Doyon and Don McLeod having their homemaking services cut off? These people are not going to be able to stay in their homes. These people are not going to be able to enjoy their quality of life any longer, as limited as it is right now, because this government chooses to provide a tax rebate to the wealthiest in the province. Meanwhile, they choose also, at the same time, to cut homemaking services to these people who require these services, who need these services, who must have these services in order to remain a bit independent.

The Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is here this evening. He received a letter from me today asking him to come to Sudbury to explain to these four people, plus the many other cases we received over the weekend, to justify what you are doing to these people who require homemaking services, and then maybe the member from Burlington can stand up and say, "You're right; we've re-evaluated. These people need these services."

Ms Churley: It's almost 9 o'clock.

The Acting Speaker: Yeah, wouldn't you like that? Actually, where we are is that the member for Burlington now has two minutes to respond to the comments that were made.

Mr Jackson: I appreciate the comments of all members who have responded. I am a little concerned at the comment made by the member for Essex about expenses in his cat-calling across the House. I should put on the record for him, as well, some of the issues around the expenses which were never really put on the public record as they should have been.

He might be pleased to know that if he was referring to expenses for MPPs, for example, for their accommodation and transportation back and forth to Toronto, a look at the local Hamilton-Burlington area is quite enlightening. It would appear that if you analyzed my last eight years here, my expenses are \$366 a month for my accommodation and transportation. The Liberal member for Hamilton Mountain's are \$1,310. Next on the list is the NDP member for Hamilton West, and his are \$1,462 a month. Then, of course, the expenses of our learned friend from Hamilton East are \$1,546 a month of taxpayers' money. But the absolute winner, the absolute spending giant for MPP expenses in our region, is a fellow who shares part of the responsibility to represent the good city of Burlington, Mr McMeekin, the member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot. He has himself a lovely, well-appointed apartment at \$14,276 a month and, frankly, when you look at his expenses, they

are \$1,654 a month for transportation. Those are the records of the expenditures of the MPPs in our area. I think the member opposite would be wise to reconsider when he raises the issue of expenditures again.

2100

Ms Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): From a policy perspective, I have to say that most people who are Conservatives and have been long-time Conservatives have been very clear over the last several weeks that they think the government is crazy to go down this road. Let's just speak about what we're hearing from long-time Conservatives—never mind what Liberals are going to say; you're going to expect that the Liberals are going to be opposed to this bill, which we are.

I want to speak from a personal perspective: seniors from Windsor West and issues that I've been dealing with as the representative there for the last eight years. When I talk to seniors and they call my office, they talk about one number-one issue repeatedly, and that's health care. You have a track record of what you have done to seniors over the last eight years that is appalling.

Maclean's came out with another list today. They came out to talk about where Windsor was ranked in terms of our health services. It's appalling. I have to say that across the province we don't have a city anywhere that has fewer doctors than we do. What is the number-one issue for seniors regularly? It's health care and can they access it. The Maclean's study today itemized wait times for things like hip surgery and knee replacements and all of those things. I have people in my riding who are bedridden; they're having difficulty walking. Do you know what we have to do? We have to organize to try to get them to London to get in to get their operations done. When we speak with the London hospital to say, "Could you tell us why they are waiting a year just for the consultation, never mind the intervention that may happen a year later?" they say, "We don't have room."

Never in Ontario's history have we had more hospitals with the level of debt that they have today. Deficits annually are \$1.4 billion across the province in all our hospitals. That is appalling, and the government continues to attend ribbon-cutting ceremonies and whatever for all of this capital expansion. People where I come from figure they'd like to get treated in a barn if only they had the staff to do it for them. We have fewer nurses than anywhere in Canada, except for the province of British Columbia. That is appalling in the most populous province in the nation.

We have nurses who are working part-time, as we've realized with the SARS. Our goal will be to have 70% of our nurses working full time, because today 50% are working part-time and jumping from place to place in order to get a full-time, secure pay.

We've got lots of problems with our seniors. We had this big glowing announcement about having the drug available for macular degeneration, only to find out that our seniors have to be half blind before they qualify for the drug. We've got people in nursing homes and their families who call us about the condition and the care. I

remember asking the minister in this House how many baths he takes a week, because we know the standards are just not there in our nursing homes. The government eliminated nursing standards in our nursing homes and comes up with every excuse in the world why that's OK.

I want to talk about the dignity that our seniors ought to be living with, which they don't have today. You tell me how this bill is going to improve their lot in life, because it won't. This is not the bill that's going to help the majority of seniors who really need government help. This is a pittance compared to what our system has to fund to make services available for our seniors that they need at this time.

Can you actually imagine a government creating a policy that says only those people who need the services are going to pay for them? I guess only families who have kids in the school system are going to be forced to pay for education. Seniors who built the nation understood long before we ever got to this chamber that education is the cornerstone of a successful country, a successful province and that we're all prepared to invest in it. What is around the corner? Every couple out there who has no children won't have to pay education taxes, because somehow we're not responsible for the education of our country's young people? That is appalling to think a government would try to advance that kind of policy. Moreover, the seniors I speak to are very interested in the fact that our young people will be educated well and that the best thing you could do for our kids is put them in smaller classes so they could have more attention.

So here we are tonight debating this minuscule, which is what it will be for most seniors, to get some pittance of a rebate on property tax, something you've had eight long years to bring in if you truly believed it, and only now on the cusp of an election do you throw this out like pap for the seniors.

A couple of weeks ago, I had a call about a little boy. This little guy is really struggling right now in his school. The teacher keeps having to send him to the principal, and under the new school disciplinary act, the Safe Schools Act, he keeps getting thrown out of school. The kid is seven years old and he's really struggling. He keeps getting sent home because there's no one to help him in that classroom. That kid doesn't have a teacher's assistant; the funding is just not there.

In the same week that we were dealing with this single mom who has to work full-time and doesn't know what to do when they're going to send the kid home because the kid is acting out in the classroom and being very disruptive and really needs attention, I get an e-mail from a mom whose daughter is afraid to go to school because there's a young boy in that same class who keeps having these outbursts and is quite violent. The mom says, "I don't know what to do. I want my daughter in school, but I don't want her to be afraid. I'm afraid for my child's safety, because there isn't enough assistance in that classroom to help this boy who truly needs help."

These are the kinds of issues that all of us should be coming together on to say, "How do we get enough

assistance in that classroom to help these young kids thrive?" Instead, you're prepared to take this amount of money and feed it out there like pap to our seniors and say, "Here. Thanks a bunch for your assistance."

Are you going to tell young people that they don't have to pay as much tax because they don't use the health system? So you get the seniors to pay for health costs because they use it, but the seniors don't have to pay for education because they don't use it. This is craziness. This is craziness. Don't take it from me; take it from long-time political observers who have watched the system who say this is wrong.

This isn't what we believe in. The government is supposed to be there for us. We collect the taxes, and based on who wins the election, we deliver it. We deliver it in a manner that we think our population needs and wants. So when we talked to people and said to seniors, "What's your number-one issue," they said, "It's health care." That's what they said in my riding. I said we have to commit to making those hip replacements happen faster.

I've got somebody who lives on my street. We couldn't get her in to see a neurosurgeon. The daughter brought the mom to the appointment, and the people behind the desk said, "You don't have an appointment today." "Yes, I do. Here's the card for the appointment." The appointment was for the next year on that same day. We managed to get this woman in for consultation in Detroit. She ended up having consultation and surgery, and today is walking around my block twice a day every day. That woman would have been bedridden had we not been able to make that happen. Our health system was not prepared to help this woman. So here's a woman who's benefited from our health system but has also contributed all along.

I say that's the kind of policies I want to see from this government. That's the kind of policies that Dalton McGuinty is going to bring into this Parliament. We're going to have a health system that does focus on home care. This government will say anything they want people to believe. They talked about tax cuts the last time they went to the polls. But when it came and the rubber hit the road, what they did was bring in a new law that broke the old law because they couldn't meet their pledge to give the tax cuts that government was promising. When I see key Conservative spokespeople talking about looking for and seeing a \$2-billion deficit on the books today, where will the government come up with the money it's promising, because it will cost hundreds of millions of dollars.

When I put the question to seniors: "Do you want good health care from this government, or do you want this measly rebate," almost without fail people are telling me, "Make sure I have a health system that will be there for me. Make sure I have the hip replacement when I need it and that I stay in my home."

To hear a former minister responsible for seniors in the House tonight talk about keeping seniors in their homes—they could have a fabulous home and a fabulous rebate of their property tax, but they want to stay in their

home if they have a little bit of help. Unfortunately, today we've got community care access centres that are cutting homemaking services right across the board in that community. How will these people stay in their own homes? At this point, they certainly wouldn't have the finances. What do you expect them to do? Hire private nurses to take care of them to keep them in their home, or bring in private people to make them meals because the government doesn't support them any more? We'll put those questions to the electorate if this government has the nerve to actually call an election.

On the basis of policy alone, what do we owe our seniors? We owe it to them to take care of them in nursing homes and introduce standards and actually fund for proper, nutritional meals, for example, so that we have dieticians who work with our seniors and see that they're eating properly. We want to see hospitals properly funded so they can take care of our old people. That's what we're committed to, and I hope the rest of the province will agree with us.

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The Acting Speaker: Members now have up to two minutes for questions and comments.

Ms Churley: Mr Speaker, it being almost 9:30 of the clock—just kidding; we have a few more minutes.

The member for Windsor West made some very good points about this being a slippery slope that we're on here. This pre-election bribe, this desperate pre-election bribe by this government because they're down in the polls, means we're starting to go down this very slippery slope. I think we all agree, and I've said before, and my colleagues have said, around this whole issue, that we all support help and tax breaks for low- and middle-income seniors. In fact, there is such an existing system. They should get that help, and they need it.

But the last thing we need is this kind of special break for all seniors from paying their portion of the education tax. It is a vital service that contributes to our society for all time. I can't say it nearly as well as Bill Davis recently did, the former Conservative Premier of this province who spent many years of his life building the public education system in this province. He is described as having a tear in his eye as he talked, for the first time publicly, about the demise of our public education system under this government, a Conservative government, and how sad it is for him to see that happen.

We need everybody contributing to our education system. It benefits us all in the immediate time frame and down the road. The slippery slope we're on here now with this pre-election bribe is just plain dumb and plain wrong. Of course, they have the numbers to push it through, and I wish they would reconsider.

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): I think it's unfortunate that the member for Toronto-Danforth, who is a long-time member in this House and has the experience to know better, talks about bribes in this place. I would like her to know, and I would like anyone who is watching to know, that there are two things about this government: one, we are not desperate,

and two, we have never entered into bribes because, frankly, that's not something our government has never needed to do. I'm not suggesting that other governments have done it either, and that's why I take exception to the use of that language.

When we talk about this education tax credit for seniors, we're talking about something that we talked about on the Peel district public school board in 1974, when I first started in politics as a trustee. There was always the question about who paid for the education of our students. Do you know what? It gets to a point of, how long are we going to ask seniors to pay for a public education system. Some of them pay very heavily through their income tax anyway.

But the point is that when this member talks about Premier Bill Davis building the education system to what it is, until he left in 1984, it's absolutely true, as did Premier Robarts before him. It was Premier Robarts who brought us the community colleges. We do have that history in Ontario, and I'm very proud of the history of our government and the Progressive Conservative Party in Ontario.

Mr Crozier: The member for Windsor West has pointed out, rightly so, that this whole tax scheme is tied into the education taxes that our seniors pay. The name of Bill Davis has been mentioned a couple of times here and I too want to refer to what he has said.

Mr Wettlaufer: All of what he said?

Mr Crozier: I don't have time in a minute and a half. He reminded his audience that everyone will pay a price down the road if we shortchange young people's education. So I will refer to the fact that speaks of people of his generation who are in the age group of seniors.

An editorial in the Toronto Star said: "Many who grew up in the Davis era are standing by silently as schools deteriorate, government policy encourages families to desert the public system and post-secondary education grows beyond the financial means of students."

The member for Mississauga said, "How long must seniors go on to pay?" I suggest to you that seniors benefit from the young people who are educated in our system. As they grow older they benefit, perhaps, even more. Bill Davis said, "Show me a good doctor, a good lawyer, a good whatever and I'll show you a good kindergarten teacher, a good high school teacher and a good university professor." We all continue to benefit from this education system, no matter what our age.

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I'm a senior and I'm very proud of it, to be very honest with you.

I heard the member from Windsor West suggest that all the high-profile Conservatives in her area are very upset about this; in my area it tends to be a little bit different. Many of the key Liberals are suggesting that this is a not bad way to go, that it will definitely stimulate the economy because some of those seniors will have more money.

One of things that concerned me is that she made a comment about doctor shortages. The funny part of it is that if the Peterson government and the Rae government

had prepared for doctor shortages, which were in existence then, we would not have had the problem. I constantly listen to this election issue. I don't know, maybe I'm the only one in this House that doesn't know—is there an election being called? I don't think there is. I don't think this is an election issue. When the members of the opposition turn this thing into an election issue, when they turn against seniors, they are against everything. You guys have never voted for anything in this House. You were even against sending kids back to school last week. I cannot understand when you believe more in the OSSTF and the Catholic teachers' organization than you do in kids. No wonder some of the key Liberals are coming over to our side. I am ashamed to listen to you suggesting that the doctor shortage has happened only in the last five years; it hasn't. You know it, and it's about time you admitted it.

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Ms Pupatello: Let me reiterate that as far as public policy is concerned, all those who watch politics and governments of every political stripe suggest that this is crazy. It's crazy to suggest that a select group of people ought not to pay for the system from which all of us in the community benefit. It is a fundamental principle behind how government works. It would be like saying that seniors are going to be the only ones to pay for health care because they are the largest users. That is crazy talk, it is crazy policy and we should just not go down that road. We felt the same way when the government introduced user fees across the board, because they become prohibitive and only the select few who can afford it get to take advantage of it.

There are serious shortages of physicians across the board: in Peterborough, in Wawa, in Windsor. No matter where you go, most of Ontario is now underserved. The reality is that up until this point the government could blame every other government that came before it. This government has been here for eight years. We could have graduated doctors in these last eight years. We could have graduated the numbers that we needed. The government failed to do so.

The government has never been elected for its health care platform, so you can't stand up in the House today and pretend for a moment that you're going to go to the people with your track record in health care. There is overwhelming evidence that your restructuring program that you started has been an abject failure. You have woefully underestimated capital expenses, which is why you have to turn to the private sector. You've woefully underestimated diagnostic services, so you turn to the private sector.

Seniors in my riding, if they've got the thousands of dollars to pay for services—welcome to the new Ontario. I will be going door to door to suggest that you'll only do it to get elected, because you can't deliver.

Ms Churley: I had a couple of moments earlier this evening to give my position on this issue before us tonight. As I said, I see this as a pre-election bribe to get people to vote for the Tories in the next election, because

they're down in the polls. You can imagine them all huddled in the backrooms. "What are we going to do? Which target group are we going to after to get our numbers up enough so that we can win the next election?" It is so cynical. It is so transparent. I find it rather sickening.

I mentioned before that the existing seniors' tax credit had an income cap that made sure it got to the people who needed it most. We all agree in this Legislature that if that is not adequate—I would say that, under the existing government for the past eight years, especially for seniors on fixed incomes, it has become harder and harder for them to pay the bills every month.

I see in my constituency office, on a fairly regular basis, since this government got rid of rent control, situations where a senior—I shouldn't mention her name because she didn't give me permission; she may allow me to do so—as an example, a very elderly lady who had lived for over 20, maybe over 30, years in the same high-rise apartment building in my riding. She had all of her furniture from when she was a young woman crammed into that apartment—a two-bedroom apartment, I believe. Her husband died, and around the same time her rent went up quite a lot. She could no longer afford to live in that apartment. She was offered a bachelor that she might be able to afford to pay the rent on, but it meant that she had to give up all of her possessions at this age of her life—all those things that meant so much to her. Some of those possessions had extreme sentimental value; some were very useful. She didn't want to move. As it turned out, she couldn't afford that apartment either on her lower income. She came to me for help. I said, "I will see what I can do to help find you an adequate seniors' apartment in seniors' public housing." Of course, when I looked around Toronto and in the area where she wanted to stay—because she wasn't all that mobile any more and she didn't want to lose her friends. She didn't have a car and didn't drive—there was nothing available. She was stuck. I don't really know what happened to her ultimately because I walked that line as far as I could to try to help her and I reached a dead end because the safety nets that used to be there are no longer there. This government stopped building affordable housing completely, so the list for people waiting for seniors' apartments has gone through the roof. It's years of waiting. That's just one example of the kinds of constituents I see in my office who are really quite desperate.

There are other situations where many of these seniors only have enough money to pay the rent but they have no money for food and, in some cases, no money for telephones or transportation any more. They're going to the food banks. They are very embarrassed by this. Many of those people would not ask for help if they lay dying. They're too proud. They feel that they've given to this society, and now, in their last years, this is the kind of payback they get.

This is not going to help those people. This is going to predominantly help the millionaires we mentioned earlier, like Ted Rogers, Ken Thomson and Peter Munk—a gift of \$18,000 each—and this is on top of the tax breaks

they've received over the years from this government since they first took office in 1995. They're going to get another big gift back now.

I would say to the government, as I said earlier, this is the wrong way to go. Why don't we all sit down and figure out what seniors most need? We hear about a lot of things in this Legislature. I want to talk about home care for a moment, because that's a very vital service that keeps many of these seniors in their homes. Increasingly, we're seeing that these seniors can't stay in their homes because their home care has been cut.

The government members like to get up and talk and razz, I believe, both opposition parties and say, "When you were in government you didn't build one more long-term-care bed," or whatever. I remember what we did when we were in government and I also remember the Tories, then sitting right here as the third party, on their feet day after day giving us heck for spending money in times of a recession. One of the things that I'm proud of, although it didn't help us with the electorate, and I understand that—we got booted out; it was like a depression—is that we continued to spend money to try to keep the most vulnerable in our society afloat. We didn't borrow money, as these guys did, to give tax cuts to the wealthy. I don't know if people out there realize that even in good economic times, they had to borrow money to give those tax cuts. We borrowed money to help seniors and we focused our attention on home care.

Mr Wettlaufer: We didn't borrow any money. Revenues increased.

Ms Churley: Ah, still at it. Revenues were starting to increase before you guys got into government. That's the reality, and you knew it.

We decided, as a government, despite the recession, to spend money on home care because we knew that that's where the services were sadly lacking. It doesn't mean that we didn't need more long-term-care beds—we did then and we still do—but we looked at the pitiful state of the services in home care and realized that that's where we had to invest our money. We made huge investments in that area and I'm proud of it.

When this government came to power, though, what has happened is that they've been increasingly cutting back on those home care funds over the years. It's pretty distressing when you now see vulnerable people. The member for Nickel Belt has been pointing out repeatedly—tonight, and she asked a question about it—elderly people in her riding—and she named names; she told us who they are—who depend on this meagre amount of home care to stay in their homes, and that home care has

been cut off and they're not going to get it. What's going to happen to those people? I guess some of them are going to end up in those acute care beds or long-term-care beds, if they're available, which ultimately cost the taxpayer more money down the road and, frankly, are not the best solutions for many people who want to stay in their own homes.

The government is coming at this from the wrong end, if I may say so. You're looking at this as purely, "What do we have to do to get re-elected?" We've seen from some of the other election platform promises that were made that the government has decided to target seniors, and to try to paint both of the opposition parties as being against seniors. That is what I find so terribly distressing, disgusting, sad and depressing.

As I said earlier, we're standing here and debating this public policy that I think is the wrong choice and is going to cause all kinds of problems down the road for our education system, which is already in dire straits. It's just going to make it worse. So I would say, once again, that we should not be giving thousands of dollars back to very wealthy people—albeit they're seniors, but they've got a lot of money already. I would think they'd be happy to continue contributing that amount of money, those thousands of dollars—which is not a lot when you've got a \$3-million or \$4-million home and annual incomes of multi-millions of dollars—to do their particular piece to make sure that our education system remains strong.

When the government gets up and says that it is the fault of the opposition for not supporting this and that we don't care about seniors, I think the seniors see through that; I really do. They understand what the government is doing and they also understand that the services that they need are not coming forth under this government.

So I would say to the government that you should listen to what the opposition is saying on this one, and you should listen to what a lot of other critics, including some very right-wing journalists and critics, are saying about this particular policy, which is just the wrong direction to be taking us in.

Now I can say quite legitimately, Mr Speaker, that it being 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

The Acting Speaker: Just for the technical aspect, I'll say it, but I understand your point.

It is now after 9:30 of the clock, and you are correct: this House does stand adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 2132.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller

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Mississauga South / -Sud	Marland, Margaret (PC)	Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)
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Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	McLeod, Lyn (L)
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / -Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Ottawa-Vanier	Boyer, Claudette (Ind)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Ramsay, David (L)
Oxford	Hardeman, Hon / L'hon Ernie (PC) Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre associé des Affaires municipales et du Logement	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Gerard (L)	Timmins-Baie James	Smitherman, George (L)
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Churley, Marilyn (ND)
Perth-Middlesex	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Toronto-Danforth	Sorbara, Greg (L)
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances	Trinity-Spadina	Arnott, Ted (PC)
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation / ministre de l'Entreprise, des Débouchés et de l'Innovation
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Waterloo-Wellington	Young, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Whitby-Ajax	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Sault Ste Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	Willowdale	Duncan, Dwight (L)
		Windsor West / -Ouest	Kwinter, Monte (L)
		Windsor-St Clair	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York Centre / -Centre	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York North / -Nord	Sergio, Mario (L)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	
		York West / -Ouest	
		Mississauga West / -Ouest	Vacant

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

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

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