



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

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de l'Ontario

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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 11 June 2003

Mercredi 11 juin 2003

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 11 June 2003

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 11 juin 2003

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ST ANTHONY'S PARISH

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): It's with a great deal of pride that I stand here today and offer our congratulations to St Anthony's parish on its 50th anniversary celebration, la festa del cinquante anniversario. This parish has been the bedrock of consistency and comfort for people of all ages in Sudbury. The parish has provided consistency, comfort, refuge and a place of spiritual guidance and renewal. For parishioners of St Anthony's, it has been the foundation and cornerstone of our faith, hope and the values we hold dear.

Their celebrations start tonight with a tridium at the church. That will continue until Friday, when there will be the annual St Anthony's Festival. There will be the mass and then the traditional distribution of the holy bread. On Saturday, they will celebrate their 50th anniversary with a mass and a gala dinner and dance at the Caruso Club. On Sunday, we will have our traditional St Anthony's Festival. After mass, there will be a parade through the streets of Gatchell, and then there will be fun and games for people of all ages.

I'd like to congratulate Father Rodgers and Rita Verrilli, the chair of the parish council, for their hard work in planning this very special time. St Anthony's community has helped build Gatchell and Sudbury and made it a very strong place. We are proud of what that community has done for our community, and so, together, all of us in this House and the constituents of Sudbury say auguri, congratulations.

FIRE IN DELHI

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): On the evening of Tuesday, May 27, more than 50 firefighters from six Norfolk county fire stations converged on Delhi as a warehouse blaze shot flames 200 feet in the air and filled the sky with black smoke. Firefighters, construction companies and others in the community spent the better part of two days battling the fire, fuelled by 1,500 bales. Some 4,500 feet of irrigation pipe had to be laid to supply extra water.

In recent years, we've all been reminded of the selfless efforts and heroic dedication of our emergency service workers, and we're all grateful for the protection they provide. We owe them a debt of thanks.

I'd like to point out that, as in many rural communities, our fire departments are primarily volunteers. I'd also like to make note that this past weekend marked the retirement of a volunteer with the Vittoria fire department. Jim Melville is hanging up his suspenders after 36 years, give or take, of dedicated service.

At this time, I would like to express my sincere thanks to all those emergency workers, firefighters, police officers, county personnel, Ministry of the Environment workers and private companies that were at the scene and involved in the battle, a battle that our local paper dubbed the "Delhi inferno." These people continue to ensure the safety of Norfolk county.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): As the cost of dealing with unanticipated as well as expected health concerns continues to rise, as disability pensions remain capped at 1993 rates, as the Ministry of the Environment scrambles to find enough staff and financial resources to protect the fragile ecosystem, as municipalities are forced to raise property taxes and cut services to meet new burdensome costs from the downloading of provincial responsibilities, as nursing home patients are forced to pay even more for badly underfunded services, the Eves Conservatives have an endless supply of taxpayer dollars to squander on self-congratulatory, blatantly partisan advertising on television and radio, in newspapers and magazines, and on glossy self-promoting pamphlets mailed to every Ontario home. Whether warning people about the dangers of SARS or the West Nile virus, urging people to buy Ontario government bonds, or promoting education or health programs, the Eves government injects a strong dose of partisanship into each and every ad and sends the bill to Ontario taxpayers.

Members of the Ontario Legislature will have an opportunity to put an end to this abuse of public office, an abuse of taxpayers, by passing the Preventing Partisan Advertising Act, 2003, which I have presented to the Legislature to be debated and voted upon tomorrow morning. The Tory ad agencies that make millions of dollars from the taxpayers may be disappointed, but hard-working Ontario taxpayers will thank this Legislature for passing my bill.

IRMA BURMAN

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I rise today to pay tribute to an outstanding individual who recently passed away in Scarborough. Irma Burman was born on April 30, 1917, on a farm in Thorold, Ontario. Her maiden name was Kuhnel and she was the youngest of five children, I am told. I am also told that Irma was always an adventurous young lady.

Irma moved to Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1927 with her family, and returned to Canada in 1935, settling in Toronto, where she started a career in the restaurant business and catering. She married Walter in 1947, and in 1949 their first son, Jon, was born. In 1955, Irma won the Irish Sweepstakes and used the proceeds, \$2,000, for a downpayment on the family's first home at 75 Fenwood Heights. Her son Bart was born in 1959, two years prior to the purchase of the family's current home on Centennial Road, more recently known as Tall Pines Court.

Subsequently, throughout the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, Irma worked tirelessly for the preservation of the Rouge Valley, Meadowvale pond and Centennial swamp. Back in those years, it was an exploding community, with new homes and subdivisions. Irma's main interests were in planning and environmental issues. She was helpful throughout the years to her many friends and neighbours and stayed active and interested in political issues that affected her friends and neighbours. Irma Burman was an outstanding individual and a role model for many.

I stand today to pay tribute to Irma and the many accomplishments of her lifetime. She will be missed.

1340

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): Contrary to the claims of Chris Stockwell, I don't believe it is common practice to use riding association money to pay for family vacations. In fact, this is a complete abuse of a privilege members have, whereby riding associations can assist members with political expenses.

Fundraising is a necessary and, for me, the least-liked aspect of the political process, but I take the process very seriously. When supporters decide to offer financial support, they do so because they believe in what I stand for and the issues that I work on. Their expectation is that the money they contribute will be used for direct political purposes, primarily to fund political campaigns. When holding a fundraising reception, I explain how raising money is a necessary part of our democratic political system and I thank them for contributing to the process. I believe that the expectations of my contributors are that their donations will be used to further my political career and will not be used for personal purposes. I can't imagine the reaction if, after an event, after thanking everyone for their contributions, I let them know that it's my intention to use the money to finance a luxury family

trip to Europe. I don't believe anyone in the room would approve of that expenditure.

As elected officials, we have many financial resources available to us to carry out our duties. When any one of us abuses those privileges, it brings contempt upon our democratic system. Shame on you, Mr Stockwell.

SARS

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): SARS continues to wreak havoc on Ontarians and Ontario, yet not a penny from the federal Liberals in support to aid in addressing the impact that SARS has had on people's lives and on communities here in Ontario. What do we get from the federal Liberals? A taxpayer-funded Rolling Stones concert. Let me tell you, there are nurses out there who have been telling this government and telling anyone who will listen that they need adequate protective gear. There are nurses out there who have been loud and clear about needing more staffing because nurses have been run ragged, along with other health professionals, as they respond front-line, at great risk to themselves, to the SARS crisis.

Yet the federal Liberals give us a taxpayer-funded Rolling Stones concert. I was shocked this morning to see that, yes, the province of Ontario has joined the bandwagon, the Globe and Mail reporting that it's throwing \$2 million into that hopper as well.

Let me tell you, where I come from folks have no interest whatsoever in this type of circus in response to real crisis. They have no interest in seeing their tax money wasted on a Rolling Stones concert when those tax dollars should be invested in rebuilding the health care system.

By the way, I say to the government: Rolling Stones? Why don't you give Walter Ostanek a call, Canada's polka king down in St Catharines? You could probably persuade him to do it for free, and he has had more Grammy nominations and awards than the Rolling Stones ever have.

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I rise today to tell my fellow members about how this government is investing in fish and wildlife in my great riding of Perth-Middlesex.

On behalf of the Honourable Jerry Ouellette, our hard-working Minister of Natural Resources, I announced \$60,000 worth of provincial funding for projects which will rehabilitate fish and wildlife habitats and encourage outdoor recreation. This funding was provided under Ontario's Living Legacy fish and wildlife protection and enhancement program.

The municipality of West Perth and the Mitchell wetlands committee are each receiving \$15,000 to help rehabilitate the former Mitchell sewage lagoons. The decommissioned sewage lagoons in Mitchell will be converted into approximately 50 acres of managed wetlands,

which will create habitat for migratory shorebirds. As well, Local Outdoors Opportunities Partners, known as LOOP for short, is receiving \$30,000. This money will help fund a water study on Trout Creek, the only remaining cold water stream in Perth county, and the reforestation of sites in Perth and Huron counties. As well, one third of LOOP's funding will go toward encouraging Perth county's youth to try fishing and outdoor activities at events like this Saturday's Youth Day, hosted by the Mitchell Fish and Game Club.

These are just a few of the more than 800 fish and wildlife projects which have received funding from Ontario's Living Legacy, the largest natural heritage program in provincial history.

BSE

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): It appears as if our Minister of Agriculture is now taking lessons from the Chris Stockwell school of deny everything, and if all else fails, call a reporter with a long-standing history of integrity a liar.

Monday morning's Canadian Press story by Colin Perkel regarding Ontario meat inspectors reports an interview with Dr Tom Baker, the head of the ministry's food inspection branch. Dr Baker confirmed in this interview that at least one third of the inspectors in this province lacked specific BSE training.

The Minister of Agriculture has her people running around for two days figuring out how to spin this, and all she can come up with is to accuse Perkel of false and inaccurate reporting.

The internal e-mails out of this ministry speak for themselves. I've got those e-mails right here. Cora Castro, project coordinator, meat inspection, e-mails out to inspection managers on May 27, 2003, asking for names of inspectors who have not had the BSE training done a couple of years ago. This e-mail was marked high priority—no kidding. Here's another from an area inspection manager desperately trying to find out who hasn't had BSE training. They don't even know who has and has not been trained.

Colin Perkel is a tough but honest reporter who has taken shots at all of us. His integrity, though, has never come into question. Shame on the Minister of Agriculture for suggesting otherwise. The evidence speaks for itself. Mr Perkel is not the one making false and misleading statements.

TIM HORTONS CAMP DAY

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): This morning I was able to spend some time in my beautiful riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka. I was there to participate in the Tim Hortons Camp Day. Today Tim Hortons stores are celebrating their annual Camp Day fundraiser. This is the single largest fundraiser for the Tim Horton Children's Foundation, and spans more than 2,200 Tim

Hortons stores in Canada and 160 stores in the United States.

Buy a cup of coffee today and help to send more than 9,000 kids, who could otherwise not afford it, on the camping adventure of a lifetime.

Last year, thanks to the support of their customers, Tim Hortons raised \$4.8 million in 24 hours. This money has allowed more than 54,000 children and youth since 1974 to attend a foundation camp, including the Tim Hortons camp in the Parry Sound district.

These children are selected from local communities by store owners, in conjunction with local organizations. The success would not be possible without the store owners and staff.

Today I was at the store in Gravenhurst with the owners, Jeff and Patty Watson, and their staff to help pour coffee and greet customers. They had a great crowd of people coming through the store supporting the event. The Watsons' store is one of many participating in this important event in my riding. Dave and Tim Gibson's stores in Parry Sound and Nobel, and Larry Greenwood's stores in Huntsville and Bracebridge are also donating their entire coffee proceeds.

Tim Hortons Camp Day is a great event and I was happy to be there to help support this charity. I would like to encourage you all to support Tim Hortons and Camp Day throughout the province today.

Congratulations and thanks to Tim Hortons staff for their dedication to a very worthwhile charity.

VISITORS

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In the gallery today is Helena Nielsen, who is the former school trustee for Scarborough. She is joined by Anny Schmid-Gauss, who is the daughter of the former mayor of Braunsdorf, Austria, and is accompanied by her husband, Gunter Schmid, both visiting from Austria.

ANNUAL REPORT, INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg to inform the House that today I've laid upon the table the 2002 Annual Report of the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intend-

ed appointments dated June 11, 2003, of the standing committee on government agencies.

Pursuant to standing order 106(e), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on regulations and private bills and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill Pr21, An Act respecting Tyndale College & Seminary (formerly Ontario Bible College and Ontario Theological Seminary).

Your committee recommends that Bill Pr6, An Act respecting the Society of Professional Accountants of Ontario, be not reported.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

1350

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ELECTION AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI ÉLECTORALE

Mr Conway moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 94, An Act to amend the Election Act, 2003 /
Projet de loi 94, Loi modifiant la Loi électorale.

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

The member for a short statement?

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): With an eye to the political calendar here in Ontario, I thought it was time for me, and on behalf of my friend Mr Bradley, to introduce a bill that is very simple. It would require that in future Ontario provincial general elections the ballot set out not just the names of the candidates but the political affiliation of said candidates.

PIPELINE EXCAVATION SAFETY AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ ET LA RESPONSABILISATION RELATIVES À L'EXCAVATION DE PIPELINES

Mr Sergio moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 95, An Act to provide for greater safety and accountability in pipeline excavations and to amend the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000 to require annual reports in the pipeline sector and to increase penalties for offences under the Act / Projet de loi 95, Loi

prévoyant une sécurité et une responsabilisation accrues en matière d'excavation de pipelines et modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes techniques et la sécurité afin d'exiger la présentation de rapports annuels dans le secteur des pipelines et d'augmenter les peines imposées pour les infractions à la Loi.

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

The member for a short statement?

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): This bill calls for enhanced rules with respect to activities or excavations that may interfere with pipeline that is used for transmission or distribution of oil and gas. This act would provide for greater safety and accountability in pipeline excavations and would amend the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000, to require annual reports in the pipeline sector and to increase penalties for offences under the act. The short title is the Pipeline Excavation Safety and Accountability Act, 2003.

This bill follows the tragic deaths of eight Ontarians as a result of an explosion at a Toronto west-end strip mall last April. The deadly explosion occurred while a road crew was digging up a sidewalk and a backhoe accidentally struck a buried gas line. Within days, another person was killed in Windsor due to a powerful gas explosion and three other victims were injured.

There needs to be a commitment to reduce the hazards that are often caused by human error or by digging too close to gas pipelines. I believe we have a responsibility to protect the public and to make gas pipelines safe. If my bill is approved by the Legislature, we can reduce the chance of another incident and loss of lives.

MACDONALD-CARTIER FREEWAY ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR L'AUTOROUTE MACDONALD-CARTIER

Mr Lalonde moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 96, An Act to amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act to officially recognize Highway 401 as the Macdonald-Cartier Freeway / Projet de loi 96, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement des voies publiques et des transports en commun afin de reconnaître officiellement l'autoroute 401 comme l'Auto-oute Macdonald-Cartier.

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

The member for a short statement?

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): Highway 401 was named the Macdonald-Cartier Freeway in 1965 by Premier John Robarts to honour two fathers of Confederation, Sir John A. Macdonald and Sir George-Étienne Cartier. The name "Macdonald-Cartier Freeway" has never been formally designated in legislation.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs): First, I'd like to congratulate francophone affairs for being once again 100% from the privacy commissioner.

I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

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

Hon Mr Baird: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following changes be made to the ballot list for private members' public business:

Mrs Boyer and Mr Colle exchange places in order of precedence such that Mrs Boyer assumes ballot item number 20 and Mr Colle assumes ballot item number 17.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Ms Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Chair of Management Board. I'd like to return to the matter of your largest fundraiser giving your largest donor highly unusual assistance with pension money.

But before I do, I have a question for you. Mario Cortellucci isn't just the biggest donor; he also happens to be a fundraiser himself. Minister, I'd like you to tell us if you think it's appropriate for you to be the judge and jury in this case when you yourself raised over \$128,000 at fundraisers held by Mr Cortellucci and his brother at his banquet hall.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture): First of all, I'm not the judge and jury here. The fact of the matter is, the matter was reported back to me by my deputy minister, and a report came back from the general counsel. So we have looked at the process, we think it's appropriate, and that's the end of the story.

Ms Pupatello: Minister, we know you've done well by Mario Cortellucci. Raising \$120,000 is a lot of work, and perhaps you feel you owe him. It's interesting that the Cortellucci hall is absolutely nowhere near Markham, which is your riding.

I know Ernie Eves and the PC Party have done well by Mario Cortellucci; more than \$1 million is a lot of money. But I'd like to ask you about your top fundraiser, Mr Don Weiss. So far you've refused to offer details about the operation of the Ontario Pension Board since

you appointed Don Weiss as chair. Can you tell us why Don Weiss's salary was increased by 67% in 2001, at a time when the pension board had its worst performance in five years?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: First of all, if we look at things on a rational basis, as I said before, the Ontario pension fund is the only major pension fund that actually made money over their past performance, where the average loss of public sector pension funds has been in the neighbourhood of about 5%. So clearly the member is wrong in that.

Secondly, with respect to process, which she was asking originally before she got on to this other stuff, frankly, the authority to make all these type of investments—I have been part of the process; I have talked about it. It's been that way since 1991 and there has been no change.

1400

Ms Pupatello: The information is found in the annual report of the Ontario Pension Board. The pension board's annual report states that the year after Don Weiss took over was the worst performance in half a decade, but he gave himself a 67% increase in salary anyway.

We know you appointed Don Weiss to head the pension board. We know he worked as a fundraiser for the PC Party while he was on the board. We know he lent millions of dollars to your top donor. No one can explain the decision of the Ontario Pension Board about the operation of the pension board.

I'm wondering if you can explain something else. Why did Don Weiss, since he has become chair of the Ontario Pension Board, cut the spending on audits there by 40%? Why is there 40% less spending on the auditing of investments under your top fundraiser?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: It's nice if we could deal with some facts, again. Let's return to the facts for a second. The member again is talking about whether the pension fund has been successful or not. Frankly, as I said, it's the only major public sector pension fund that actually made money.

If I can return to that again, if we look at the plan's 10-year rate of return to December 31, 2002, it averaged 9.86% per annum. Clearly the fund is performing. Clearly we have processes—I have been continually saying this for about a week—with respect to the authority that actually makes these investments. I believe the process is there; the process has been followed.

As much as the member over there wants to try to smear people, I would suggest that if she had any guts at all, she'd say that outside of the House. Maybe some of the members of the media might ask her about her specific allegations outside of the House and let her explain those and stand by those statements.

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): My question is to the government House leader. Yesterday it was revealed for the first time that in fact your family's expenses for

the European trip were picked up by the riding association of Etobicoke Centre. You said yesterday, "It was a trip to Europe and they"—the riding association—"agreed to pay. They raised the money." That's not what was said last week. Last week you said of your family's expenses, "I just paid for it myself. I paid them personally."

This is a serious discrepancy, and it strikes at the heart of the accountability and credibility of the story and of the minister. We get version 1 one week and a different version the next week. What are we to believe?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): If you check the records from Hansard, I said the government didn't pay. I can understand that to some degree it was confusing. I certainly apologize, but it was fully an intention that I pay for some personally, the riding association files and they pay for others.

The only reason I didn't respond to that is because you didn't ask the question. Had you asked the question, I would have told you that.

Mr Bryant: Speaking of the Hansard, in one of the supplementaries I said that my "question is not about the attendance of your family. The member said that he paid for those expenses, and I take the honourable member at his word." You said that you paid for those expenses, and I took you at your word. You did not stand up and correct the record. I said in the supplementary that you paid for those expenses and I said that I took you at your word.

Why did you not correct the record? Everybody in this House was led to believe that you picked up those expenses, and I took you at your word. We have to be able to take members at their word. Why, when I stated those facts, did you not correct the record?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I sincerely apologize for not correcting the member's record.

Mr Bryant: I say to the minister, clearly the people of Ontario were led to believe last week that the entirety of your personal expenses and family expenses were picked up by you. Not only is this leaving facts out, but this is a matter of people being led to believe that your family's expenses were picked up by you, and that was simply not the case. Now we hear corrections and apologies.

There is one way to begin to get to the bottom of this, and that is for you to release all your expenses and receipts so that we can see who paid for what on this most infamous European excursion. If you duck this opportunity to release all the information and all the facts, it will speak volumes. Will you release the records?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I think the question is somewhat unfair with respect to correcting your record. I mean, if that's what you said—you may have said that; I didn't say that.

Secondly, you're talking about the expenses for my family with respect to a trip. Let me cast your mind back to June 25, 2002. Mr McGuinty, the leader of your party, was asked about \$17,000 he billed the taxpayers for his family travel. He billed \$17,000 to taxpayers.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Let me finish.

He said he wasn't going to pay it back; he thought his family should be with him. I didn't quibble with him. I understand that this job can be demanding and difficult. I did not quibble with the leader of the official opposition, and he spent \$17,000 of taxpayers' money on family travel.

The difference between what I did and what Mr McGuinty did was that I didn't charge the taxpayers; I charged my riding association. So what I hear you saying to me is, it's OK for Mr McGuinty to charge the taxpayers for his family travel, but it's not OK for me to charge the riding association for my family travel.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): New question?

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): To the Minister of the Environment, yesterday's Hansard has you saying, "I paid those bills." The June 5 Hansard has you saying, "I said that because we had trouble connecting to Rome, and extended the trip, that's when we decided to pay." Yesterday, the Globe and Mail quotes you as saying, "I paid my own hotel expenditures."

But, Minister, why is it OK to call upon taxpayer-subsidized funds, taxpayer political contributions, subsidized to the tune of 75%—75 cents on the dollar—to travel with your spouse and children through Europe?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I'm truly surprised by the question from the member opposite. I was here a couple of years ago when the very same situation happened with the leader of the third party. He had what I would classify as an emotional meltdown in the lobby outside this House.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Oh, come on.

Hon Mr Stockwell: He did. And I'm not suggesting he shouldn't have. All I'm saying is, he was questioned on how come, in his words, his young family travelled with him at taxpayers' expense. So he said he thought it was OK for his family, at taxpayers' expense, to travel with him. Now you're saying to me, "You did not use taxpayers' money. You used riding association money to pay for your family to travel." I ask you, why is it OK for taxpayers to pay for your leader's family to travel with him, and it's not OK for my riding association to pay for my family to travel with me?

1410

Mr Kormos: Minister, your family travelled with you on a luxurious, five-star tour of Rome, Paris, London and Glasgow.

Why did you say, "I paid those bills," when in fact those bills weren't paid by you but were paid by your riding association with taxpayer-subsidized dollars?

Hon Mr Stockwell: You ask me this question. Why don't you ask your own leader?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Take your seat. The member for Windsor West, come to order, please.

Sorry, Minister.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I realize that this is a touchy situation for the opposition, because here you are asking

me about my riding association paying for my family to travel with me on a business trip to Europe, and your leader submits expenses in the tens of thousands of dollars—and I'm not complaining—for his young family to travel with him. The difference is that yours is taxpayers' money and mine is riding association money.

If you have a concern with my riding association paying for my family, you must have an immense concern with the taxpayers paying for your leader's travel.

Mr Kormos: Minister, yesterday you said—and you're quoted in the National Post—"If you think I'm the only person that does that, I'm not. It happens all the time."

Tell us about what that means in terms of riding associations paying for travel through Europe for members' families.

Hon Mr Stockwell: My belief is that riding associations are there to serve the member.

During this period of time, I was Minister of Energy, Minister of the Environment and government House leader. I was working extremely hard and very long. I will take the same defence as your leader took; that's what I'm going to do. I'm going to defend myself the same way your leader did: I'm very, very busy, and if there's time to spend with your family, you take it.

My riding association offered to pay the way for my family. I am not apologizing for that. I don't get enough time as it is in the job that we work with. I will not apologize.

Further, I will say this: I have no truck or quibble with the fact that taxpayers paid for your leader's family to travel, but on the other hand, if you think that's acceptable, then you must accept the fact that a riding association should be able to do the same for the Minister of the Environment, the Minister of Energy and the House leader.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr Kormos: Minister of the Environment, I took note of your observation that it happens all the time, and I took a look at the filings that of course are available in the library and which are well-handled now, but 24 hours after your revelation, and I found a number of instances. Indeed, Lanark-Carleton Conservative riding paid out \$16,500 in living expenses to its member over the course of the last three years. Indeed, Durham riding association: a mere \$500 in member's expenses. Oh, and St Paul's: \$3,500 for member's expenses. Toronto Centre: \$2,000; \$5,000; \$3,000. Hamilton East—

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I think the standing orders are fairly clear that questions may be asked during question period to ministers based on their portfolio. I don't see that this is in compliance.

The Speaker: I'll give him some latitude. He's going to lead up to it, I'm sure. His time is running out.

The member for Niagara Centre.

Mr Kormos: Hamilton East: over \$800 in high-priced meals. But they're pikers compared to you—\$25,000-

plus in taxpayer-funded money to take your wife and kids on a European tour.

Why do you think it's right that taxpayers subsidize your wife and children travelling through Europe, staying in the most expensive hotels and undoubtedly eating at the finest restaurants that Rome, Paris, London and Glasgow have to offer?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I was working. I was working on business for the province of Ontario with respect to energy matters in Europe.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I say to the member opposite, I'm not really sure you should be heckling about what you pay back and what you don't pay back. I will say that to him.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister of Finance, come to order. The minister is very capable of answering for himself. He can't even answer because you're yelling across. I'd appreciate some order. The minister is very capable of answering for himself. Sorry, Minister.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I was working. I was working on business in Europe at the time, representing the province of Ontario. My riding association offered to pay the bill for my family to attend, as the taxpayers pay the bill when your leader and your caucus member travel; they take and pay the bill for family members. I have no truck with that. I have no complaint. I'm trying to make the point, and it seems very clear to me. If you think it's acceptable for taxpayers to pay for family travel for your leader, why are you upset when the riding association, which is not the taxpayer, pays for family travel for a minister?

Mr Kormos: You were gifted over \$25,000 in riding association monies, which are subsidized by the taxpayer up to 75%. There's no record of your declaration of that gift under section 6 of the Members' Integrity Act, as you're required to table that gift with the commissioner. Members' spousal travel is within Ontario. You visited Rome, Paris, London and Glasgow and stayed in some of the most expensive hotels on the taxpayers' tab. Why do you think it's right for the taxpayers to subsidize your spouse and children's travel through the most expensive capitals of Europe?

Hon Mr Stockwell: First of all, that's not true. It was the riding association that paid, and that's the way riding associations work. That's how they raise the money and that's how they spend the money. My executive of the riding association was in total agreement with respect to how this money was spent. That's a decision made between me and my riding association. They were quoted in the paper as saying, "Yes, this is the way we think we can support the minister."

Further, I will say to the member opposite that the decision you're taking here is that this is taxpayers'—not. It is not taxpayers' money. It is raised by the riding association. Finally, if you're so concerned about families travelling with members, why is it you say nothing when tens of thousands of dollars are spent by your leader with

his family travelling with him? I don't know how you can square this circle.

The Speaker: New question?

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): I'd say, as another Toronto member, I find it a bit incredible that you'd bring into question the reputations of members on all sides of the House taking advantage of in-Ontario travel to keep their families together. In attempting to disparage my leader and the leader of the NDP, you've done the same thing to past leaders of your party and current members. The real issue here and what you should apologize for is that you can't keep your story straight.

This isn't the first time that you've used other organizations to hide costs. You did a similar thing as a Metro councillor. In 1989, you spent four days in London and three days in Paris and charged the bill to the taxpayer. But instead of billing it to Metro council, where it would have been public and beside your name, you put the bill through the O'Keefe Centre. A media report at the time stated that under the current policy, the trip—

The Speaker: Order. I'm going to ask the member to withdraw the word "hide." I'm afraid he can't use the words "hide costs" like that.

Mr Smitherman: I withdraw that. And to show your expenses—

The Speaker: I thank the member.

Hon Mr Stockwell: This is just ridiculous.

Mr Duncan: Oh, no, it's not.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Oh, yes, it is. At the time I was travelling, I was chair of the O'Keefe Centre board. I don't even think the question is in order, quite frankly. I was chair of the board for the O'Keefe Centre. I went there on behalf of the O'Keefe Centre and actually worked on behalf of the O'Keefe Centre, and the bill was paid at the O'Keefe Centre. This is bloody ridiculous.

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues): So stand up and apologize.

Mr Smitherman: I'll not do that, Madam Minister. In fact, I think that most Ontarians looking in at this situation—

The Speaker: It's the last warning again for the Minister of Colleges and Universities. I'm not going to have her yell out like that. You start it up every day. I would appreciate your co-operation. Sorry for the interruption, member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale.

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Mr Smitherman: The ridiculous part of this is that there's a pattern here that's been going on and on and on in the form of that member making expenditures outside of the norm.

Last year, you were sensitive about expenses after having to pay back thousands of dollars in bar tabs, so you get OPG to cover your expenses. You were a sharp critic in 1989 of other councillors' travel, so you put your own expenditures through a third party, instead of through your own account.

Minister, your trip in 1989 might not have broken the rules, but it did set a pattern. Why don't you just admit that you have a really bad habit of spending a lot of other people's money, mainly taxpayers', on your habits?

The Speaker: I'll interrupt. As you know, the question needs to relate to the minister's portfolio. What he may or may not have done as a Toronto councillor, I'm afraid, is totally irrelevant. I will give you an opportunity very quickly to rephrase the question; otherwise I'm going to have to move on.

Mr Smitherman: I would ask the minister, why is it that after what went on last year, when serious questions were raised about your habits related to other governmental expenditures, you sought to find yet another loophole to make sure that someone else—taxpayers, at the end of the day—paid for your travel habits?

Hon Mr Stockwell: Let's just see what the Integrity Commissioner says. You can make all the allegations, slandering and smearing comments you want. I think I'd like to see to what the Integrity Commissioner has to say; that will be interesting.

I also ask you, if you're so concerned about taxpayers' money being spent, how come you haven't talked to your leader about \$27,000 he spent at an image consultant in Chicago and Washington? Do you think that was a fair and reasonable expense? Has he paid that back? Do you think that was government business? It's a rather selective approach that you take. You'd better not throw stones when you live in glass houses. This guy blew \$27,000 on an image consultant in the United States. What possible benefit to the taxpayer could there be?

RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing): My question is for the Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, responsible for rural affairs. Minister, you've spoken in the House recently about your ministry's rural economic development programs that are making a real difference to the folks of northern and rural Ontario through OSTAR RED.

More work needs to be done, but as a colleague of yours, I know you won't rest on your laurels. Could you tell this House how you can further help our northern and rural communities?

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I want to thank the honourable member from Nipissing for the question. Ontario's smaller, rural and northern communities sometimes lack the resources needed to drive economic development. We listened to these concerns and responded with a powerful, interactive tool called REDDI.

REDDI stands for rural economic development data and intelligence. This Web site is a cutting-edge, practical, Internet-based tool that gives rural communities access to the province's huge database to help them create local rural development solutions.

REDDI addresses barriers to economic growth that were identified in the Premier's task force on rural

economic renewal chaired by my friend the Honourable Doug Galt, including improved access to relevant information, data and resources, as well as improved capacity for economic planning. We have given Ontario municipalities that and more. Communities can also use the site to understand competitive advantages, identify local strengths and analyze current conditions and trends affecting their local economies.

Mr McDonald: Minister, that is excellent news for our municipal leaders. But do you have to be an expert or a Web master to use the REDDI system effectively?

Hon Mr Hardeman: REDDI was built and tested to ensure easy access by everyday people like you and I and the member. Essentially it's a treasure map with detailed instructions on how to use it, with guides posted every step of the way to help find the critical information that can strengthen rural and northern economies. The program is accompanied by an in-depth tutorial, which takes the user through an example analysis and provides detailed explanations of terminology used.

REDDI is a practical, easy-to-use tool, and another example of the Ernie Eves government's plan to strengthen rural and northern communities. We have a plan and a strategy for rural prosperity. Our plan is working, and we will ensure that we meet our commitments to all the good people who call rural and northern Ontario home.

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): My question is to the government House leader. The Ontario Power Generation expense was \$5,000 to \$10,000, as I understand it. If the expense had been submitted through the Ministry of Energy, the public could see it through a freedom of information act request. Because the expense came from Ontario Power Generation, there is no way to obtain the expense from Ontario Power Generation, so we don't know whether it was \$5,000 or \$6,000 or \$7,000 or \$10,000. That's a pretty big discrepancy, and we don't know exactly what it is because you've never disclosed that information.

Will you make public the Ontario Power Generation receipts?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): (a) I don't have them, and (b) it's been referred to the Integrity Commissioner. I'm certain the Integrity Commissioner will review it and make his comments.

Mr Bryant: I don't understand how the Integrity Commissioner got them if you didn't have them. You presumably gave them to the Integrity Commissioner. Who gave them to the Integrity Commissioner? No, no, here's my question.

Interjections.

Mr Bryant: Close. Will Ontario Power Generation disclose the expenses?

Interjection.

Mr Bryant: No, he's just too quick to answer a question. Will Ontario Power Generation disclose the ex-

penses? Will you disclose the expenses? If the Integrity Commissioner got them, they had to get them from somebody. Are we supposed to believe that the person who gave them to the Integrity Commissioner has disappeared? I don't care who has them; we just want them made public. Will you, as the government House leader, as the former energy minister, as a member of the executive council, have the OPG expenses disclosed to the public? Period.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I can only say this: I turned it over to the Integrity Commissioner. The Integrity Commissioner is investigating—

Mr Bryant: Then you have them.

Hon Mr Stockwell: No, I turned the matter over to the Integrity Commissioner.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I never had them.

Let me start again. The OPG paid the ground transportation. I never got the bill. I've never seen the bill. I asked—

Mr Bryant: But you gave it to the Integrity Commissioner.

Hon Mr Stockwell: No, I asked the Integrity Commissioner if they would investigate the matter. I'm quite certain that when the Integrity Commissioner—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. You've asked the question. He listened intently for your question. It's only fair that you let him answer as well.

Sorry, Minister.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I asked the Integrity Commissioner to investigate. I presume the Integrity Commissioner will talk to OPG. I presume he will get all the relevant information he needs to make the decision. It's in the hands of the Integrity Commissioner. I have great confidence in Justice Coulter Osborne. I'm sure he's done this before and I'm sure he knows what to do.

SMART GROWTH

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, last week our government took an important step in making the Smart Growth vision a reality. The announcement is over half a billion dollars of funding to support public transit in central Ontario, a major boost, I might say, to reducing my constituents' commuting time, as well as the important issue of gridlock. I know leaders in my community like Ron Hooper, Ron Hope and Bob Malcolmson and others have a great interest in this area.

This kind of announcement is critical to planning our future as we look forward 30 years into the future to three million people in southern Ontario. I'm hoping you can provide more details on this announcement. Could you tell us which parts of the province will benefit and how the action will build on Smart Growth principles?

Hon David Young (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I would start by saying that I share the member's

enthusiasm for this announcement and this big step forward in improving transit across the province. I would be remiss if I didn't take a moment to thank Mayor McCallion for all her hard work as the chair of the central panel of Smart Growth but also, over the last short while, in helping us implement some of the very important recommendations, some of the very important advice that came forward. I should say that my colleague Minister Frank Klees has shown great leadership in this regard as well.

Last week, as the member noted, there was a very significant announcement: \$453 million to improve GO Transit in the GTA-Golden Horseshoe area. It included the modernizing of the track and signal infrastructure in Union Station; GO train service to Barrie; increasing track capacity in the Georgetown-Milton area; new commuter services in Peterborough, Cambridge, Niagara Falls, Guelph and Kitchener-Waterloo; upgrading the Toronto—

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

Mr O'Toole: Our government's commitment that you have outlined not only helps the taxpayer, but also helps the economy. You know the principles of sound planning today are what we need, looking into the future, for a strong economy. Our government's commitment is followed up not just by the Smart Growth panels' hard work, but also is demonstrated by the funding that's attached to it. The Smart Growth panels are working in all parts of the province under your guidance and leadership. Obviously the challenges facing other parts of the province are different and the solutions will be different as well. I'm hoping you can provide the House and those listening today with what work is being done by the other Smart Growth panels across Ontario to help all our constituents, regardless of whether they're member-held ridings or in other parts of the province.

Hon Mr Young: I thank the member again for raising this important issue, an issue that will help us plan not just for this year and next year, but for the next three decades in this province. The central panel reported about six weeks ago. I subsequently received the northwestern and northeastern panels' reports. There are five separate Smart Growth panels. A decision was made by the Premier and Minister Hodgson, as he then was, to have different Smart Growth panels in different geographical regions of the province in order to reflect the different challenges that exist. In northern Ontario, for instance, the challenge is keeping young people in their communities, keeping jobs and attracting new jobs, and attracting new residents to those areas. In southern Ontario we have the tremendous benefit of having great growth, both in terms of population and business, but we must ensure the infrastructure is there to accommodate it.

Premier Eves has taken action in relation to the northwestern recommendation. The panel suggested that we need an excellent—

The Speaker: The minister's time is up. New question?

NURSES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question for the Minister of Health. We have another cluster of possible SARS cases today at Lakeridge Health. Health care workers at the Oshawa and Whitby sites, like health care workers everywhere in Ontario, have been working very hard and putting their lives on the line for SARS. They are heroes.

We understand that 25 registered practical nurses from the Oshawa and Whitby sites of Lakeridge Health have received their pink slips. More than half of these nurses are actually in quarantine this week. They have put their lives at risk and have worked very hard to provide high-quality health. This week, more than half of them were in quarantine as they received their notices. What are you going to do to guarantee that these workers, as a reward for their work, are not going to lose their jobs?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I have no knowledge of what she speaks. I'll look into it.

Ms Martel: If I might provide some additional information, we've got 14 nurses who will be laid off at the Whitby site. All of those are actually in quarantine right now. Eleven nurses are being laid off at the Oshawa site. They are the same nurses who worked in the emergency room where the SARS clinic is. They are the same nurses who were also working in the dialysis unit in Oshawa, the same unit where 12 dialysis patients are now showing signs of SARS. I say again, these RPNs worked very hard at Oshawa and Whitby before this outbreak. They have worked extremely hard to deal with the outbreak. More than half of them are now in quarantine. It seems their reward for their work is to be laid off. Are you going to guarantee in this House today that these nurses are not going to lose their jobs?

Hon Mr Clement: I have no knowledge of the information she seems to have. I'll look into it.

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): My question is to the Minister of Energy. You're the sole shareholder of Ontario Power Generation. Will you go out there and pick up the phone and call Ontario Power Generation and ask them to disclose the expenses that Minister Stockwell incurred in Europe last summer?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs): In conversations with management and with executives at Ontario Power Generation, I didn't have to ask. They voluntarily agreed that they would be 100% co-operative with the investigation being conducted by the Honourable Justice Coulter Osborne, just as you would expect.

Mr Bryant: That's a no. The Minister of Energy, the sole shareholder of Ontario Power Generation, will not release these expenses to the public. I say to you, this is extraordinary and unusual, that the government would not want to just disclose the expenses. One minute

Minister Stockwell said that he gave the expenses to the Integrity Commissioner; the next minute he said he never had them. Now we're supposed to believe that, in fact, the Minister of Energy has no problem with not disclosing the expenses.

I'm going to ask you again: why would you not disclose the expenses of Minister Stockwell so that we can get to the bottom of the amount of the expenses—\$5,000 to \$10,000—and exactly what they're for? This is starting to sound very suspicious, and you can fix that by disclosing the expenses.

I'll ask you again: in the interest of clearing this matter up, will the minister and sole shareholder for Ontario Power Generation pick up the phone and get those expenses disclosed to the public?

Hon Mr Baird: As I indicated to the member opposite, I had had recent conversations with senior management at Ontario Power Generation. Before I could even raise it with them, they indicated their complete, 100% willingness to co-operate completely with the review being conducted by His Honour Justice Coulter Osborne. If you want to debate this issue—I don't think there is a debate. I think the issue will be settled by His Honour Justice Coulter Osborne. I think he's probably uniquely able to follow a process that's outlined in legislation. He's uniquely capable, in that he was appointed by all members of the Legislature. He's someone of outstanding integrity, and I have a lot of confidence in him that he'll conduct an appropriate review and that Ontario Power Generation and the Ministry of Energy will be completely co-operative in any way possible.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): My question is to the Minister of Energy. With the summer hopefully fast approaching, I know many of my constituents in the great riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale are concerned about the province's electricity supply. Last summer we saw incredible demand for electricity in the record-high extreme temperatures. People are concerned about what will happen if we face similar conditions this summer.

Minister, what can you tell my constituents about Ontario's electricity supply outlook?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs): We're undertaking a comprehensive plan to increase the supply of electricity in the province of Ontario. Since this past summer, we've seen a 500-megawatt plant open in the Sarnia area, which is good news for consumers in the province of Ontario. We've seen a significant new hydro plant opened in northern Ontario. We see Huron Wind, the first commercial wind farm in the province of Ontario. That is all good news.

In the coming weeks, we'll see new supply come on-line from our nuclear reactors at Bruce, where more than 1,500 megawatts of clean energy will be on the grid, followed by 500 megawatts at Pickering. This is an

incredible increase in the amount of electricity available year over year. That will be good news, not just for taxpayers in Ontario, but it will be good news for the price for consumers.

Mr Gill: I thank the minister for that answer. In addition to the immediate concerns, I'm sure that my constituents would be interested to know about the other initiatives the government is undertaking to ensure the province's supply of electricity over the long term.

Minister, can you please tell them what actions our government is taking to ensure a supply of safe, reliable electricity now and in the future?

Hon Mr Baird: I should also note that we have an additional 800 megawatts of new, clean energy that's already on-line that wasn't available last summer with unit six at Bruce B. So Huron-Bruce county and the incredible team in that community are doing yeoman service for the people of the province of Ontario.

We have substantial plans underway. We have under construction today a significant new generation plant in Windsor. We're moving forward with the Portlands facility. Both of those are combined-cycle natural gas, which is very good for the environment when you compare it to conventional fossil fuels. The member for Niagara Falls is pushing quite hard for the third tunnel at Niagara Falls, which we believe would add some significant new generation to the province.

In addition, I had a very good conversation with the Minister of Energy for the province of Manitoba, about Ontario and Manitoba working together on the Conawapa project.

What we need is the federal government, though, to assist us in these regards by making hydro power a recognized form of clean energy. Rather than sending money to Russia to buy credits there, we can make important investments that will have a material impact on the environment in Ontario today.

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MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): My question is to the government House leader. You've had a bit of difficulty, it seems, keeping your story straight. It seems things change from here to there. I want to go back to a question that has been asked before which relates to the question, what was the exact amount that Ontario Power Generation picked up for you for your ground transportation costs while you were on your European tour?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I don't know.

Mr Smitherman: You're a powerful minister in the government over there. In response to why OPG should be out there providing these costs, you said that you're the shareholder. You clearly are a person who has exercised a lot of influence within the government, and we know that you have capacity, that it's well within your

reach, to get a handle on this very important piece of information.

I would ask you again: given the fact that your stories have been seen as somewhat inconsistent—and some people would go further on that point—why don't you do what is well within your reach, which is to seek from your ministerial colleague to get from Ontario Power Generation the exact amount of the ground transportation costs that they picked up for you on your European tour?

Hon Mr Stockwell: My business trip to Europe.

I thought I did the right thing. I don't believe I've done anything wrong and I thought I did the right thing. The minute this question was raised through a story in the paper, I immediately contacted the Integrity Commissioner and I asked the Integrity Commissioner to investigate. I didn't get the bill. I haven't had the bill. I have no idea what the bill was or the amount the bill was for.

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): Don't you see anything wrong with that?

Hon Mr Stockwell: Well, if you see something wrong, I understand that. There are a lot of things that you people think are wrong that I don't. What I am prepared to do, and what I'm very happy to do, is to have the Integrity Commissioner, who has done this on a number of occasions, investigate as to whether or not this was acceptable or the process or policy is acceptable.

I can only say to the member opposite, I know you have great, great respect for Justice Coulter Osborne. So do I. I honestly think, in the best interests of all of us, we should let him do his job.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): My question is for my honourable friend the Associate Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation. Recently the minister announced funding for the Ontario Research and Innovation Optical Network. I was pleased that the University of Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo and Conestoga College were included as funding recipients.

Will the minister take a moment to tell members of this House about this announcement and this leading-edge initiative?

Hon David Turnbull (Associate Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation): I'd like to thank the member for Waterloo-Wellington for this question.

I recently announced a \$5.8-million enhancement to the post-secondary institutions participating in the Ontario Research and Innovation Optical Network, otherwise known as ORION. Our government is investing a total of \$32.3 million for this very important five-year initiative. It will create a province-wide, high-speed fibre optic research network. ORION will link some 43 post-secondary institutions as well as over 50 publicly funded research organizations in this province.

Over five years, the total public-private investment will be \$78 million. This very much builds on our government's initiative to ensure that Ontario remains at the

forefront of global research and scientific discovery in medical research.

Mr Arnott: I want to thank the minister for his answer. I would add that members of this House know that our government has displayed an unprecedented commitment to fostering the development of science and technology in Ontario. By supporting areas such as biotechnology, we are recognizing the value of innovation and cutting-edge technology in the 21st century.

Can the minister expand on some of the exciting initiatives that our government is taking to bolster science and technology here in Ontario?

Hon Mr Turnbull: Our government recognizes that R&D is very much the fuel that drives innovation and economic growth. We've placed a priority on investments which can help to create a culture of innovation in this province. Since 1997, our government has spent \$4.2 billion on science and technology. That is more than either of the two parties across the floor. In June 2002, we announced a \$51-million biotechnology strategy. Its goal was to make Ontario one of the three top biotech centres in the whole of North America. In addition, we've made further commitments, including \$20 million to the Medical and Related Sciences Discovery District, otherwise known as MARS, \$1 billion to the Ontario Innovation Trust, \$1.25 billion to the Ontario Research and Development Challenge Fund and \$100 million to the Ontario Cancer Research Network.

HOME CARE

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): My question is to the Associate Minister of Health. Minister, the cuts that your Manitoulin-Sudbury CCAC is making to home-making services will have a devastating impact on seniors and the disabled.

Nicole Ristimaki of Hanmer is a single mom with two sons. She's completely disabled. Her five hours a week of help with laundry, meal preparation and housekeeping is being cut off. Carmelle Pelletier of Capreol was receiving two hours of help every second week with laundry and cleaning; it's gone. She is booked for more surgery on June 26 and could really use that then. Her income is \$10,000 a year, so she can hardly afford to pay for these services herself.

I ask you, Minister, what are you doing to ensure that Carmelle, Nicole and hundreds of other seniors and the disabled in our communities are going to receive the housekeeping and homemaking services that they need?

Hon Dan Newman (Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Helping Ontarians receive quality home care is a priority for our government and an issue that we take very seriously. I can tell the member opposite that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has been in contact with the Manitoulin-Sudbury Community Care Access Centre and has been assured that the most important services that keep clients in their homes and allow them to maintain their independence are not affected by changes to homemaking services. These

services include personal support such as bathing, help with eating and dressing and also caregiver respite, which includes support for family members living with and caring for clients with a high level of dependency.

As well, I want to tell the member opposite that not all homemaking tasks are changing. Essential meal preparation and laundry services for existing clients will continue. In fact, 150 clients are keeping their homemaking services, and clients who have been receiving homemaking services more than once a week are maintaining those very important services.

Ms Martel: Look, Minister, when your government took over control of CCACs with Bill 130, you took over control of CCACs. You appoint the CCAC boards, you appoint the executive directors, you determine what information is going to be distributed to the public and you hold the purse strings. This problem in Sudbury is your problem, Minister, and you've got a responsibility to fix it. We've got hundreds of seniors and the disabled who need homemaking services and are having them cut off. I related two cases to you today. I related two different cases to you last week, and I have many more. These people cannot afford to pay for these important services themselves.

I ask you, as the minister responsible for CCACs, what are you going to do to ensure that the disabled and seniors in our community get the homemaking services they deserve and need?

Hon Mr Newman: I want to say to the member opposite, what we did when we formed the government was to increase home care funding in this province. In fact, in the Manitoulin-Sudbury Community Care Access Centre area, funding has increased by 22% since 1995. There is 22% in additional dollars going to home care and community care right in the Sudbury-Manitoulin area. In fact, last year alone, funding for the Manitoulin-Sudbury Community Care Access Centre increased by almost \$190,000. We're putting our money where our mouth is with additional dollars to home care and community care in this province.

I want the member opposite to understand that there is indeed an appeal process in place for clients, as per the legislation that was passed in this House. Clients can appeal their individual case to their case manager, to the supervisor and ultimately to the executive director of the Manitoulin-Sudbury Community Care Access Centre.

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MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): I have a question to the government House leader. We have a number of different versions, Minister, as to what happened with the OPG expenses. One version was that you received it and then gave it to the Integrity Commissioner. That's what you said, but apparently that's not the case, you tell me now. Now I take it what you're saying is that you presume, as you put it, that OPG will send the expenses over to the Integrity Commissioner.

You will know, Minister, that under the opinion letter you have sought from the Integrity Commissioner, there's absolutely no basis and no means by which OPG's expenses would be sent to the Integrity Commissioner.

This is not, for the 10th time, an inquiry into a member involving submissions and evidence and investigation—this isn't. He's going to look at your letter, and he's going to send it back to you. He's not going to pick up the phone and call OPG. The only one who can do that is you, the government.

So I'm going to ask you again, why will you not pick up the phone and get Ontario Power Generation to disclose these documents that will never otherwise become public?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I don't think you're right. I think you're wrong. I think your version of the events is wrong. I never said I had received the bill—ever.

Mr Bryant: Yes, you did.

Hon Mr Stockwell: No, I didn't. I said I turned over the investigation. That's what I said.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: It doesn't change. Your version of the story changes—your version. So this is just patently absurd. I have never said anything of the sort.

Secondly, I have done what I thought you were supposed to do in this place: I asked the Integrity Commissioner to investigate.

I talked to the Office of the Integrity Commissioner yesterday after you claimed I was abusing the office. They assured me they didn't feel abused. They assured me they didn't feel put upon. In fact, they assured me this is exactly what they're supposed to do. When you have an issue like this, you give it to the Integrity Commissioner.

So I can only say to the member opposite that the versions didn't change. I spoke to the Integrity Commissioner's office. They don't share your view.

Mr Bryant: This is really convenient. The government of Ontario will not release the Ontario Power Generation expenses. The claim is made that the Integrity Commissioner is going to release the expenses, but we know the Integrity Commissioner doesn't have any statutory power to engage in that investigation.

In the midst of this shell game, now we have Minister Stockwell claiming that Hansard is also torquing the facts. Hansard is not torquing the facts.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Read it.

Mr Bryant: You said it here, and you said it out there. You said that the expenses—

Hon Mr Stockwell: Read it.

Mr Bryant: Just grow yourself a skin, OK? You said your expenses from Ontario Power Generation went off to the Integrity Commissioner. I say to you that what we want is one thing and one thing only—it's really, really simple: disclose the OPG expenses so I can stop asking for them in this House.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Mr Speaker, I am sorry I shouted out that he should read that quote that he claims I said I had the expenses. I asked him to read it; he didn't. Do you know why he didn't read it? Because he doesn't have it.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: You didn't read it. If it was there, why didn't you read it? Because you don't have it.

Secondly, I know what's going on: you do not want to have an impartial third party review this. That's what's going on. You don't want Justice Coulter Osborne to review this. You want a band of jackals in the opposition to review this. You don't want the second-highest jurist in the province of Ontario to review it.

I asked the Integrity Commissioner to review it. OPG has said they will co-operate 100%.

We know what's going on, on this side of the House: you want to try this in public without any reasoned or thoughtful review. Justice Coulter Osborne will do a reasoned and thoughtful review, and that's what you're scared of.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Listening to the Liberals opposite, you'd think there were no issues facing the people of Ontario today, but there are many. One of those issues is about student and youth employment.

Our government believes that in order for students to succeed, they need encouragement, training and resources. Our youth employment initiatives help students build character, confidence and a sense of responsibility. By working at a summer job, students develop the skills necessary to meet life's challenges.

Minister, can you tell me what programs your ministry offers to provide students with the training and skills they need in order to succeed in today's economy?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues): I want to thank my colleague for the question. Obviously, the member from Niagara Falls has always been interested in youth. All you have to do is go down there and see the opportunities young people have in his riding. So I want to thank him for the question.

We need to ensure that all of our young people have many opportunities. The programs are numerous. They're not only numerous in our secondary schools and our elementary schools, but they're numerous in our colleges, our universities, our apprenticeship programs and what we call our community-based programs. Many of these programs are for young people who do not choose to go on to college or university. Our most successful one is Job Connect where, in 2002-03, the ministry helped approximately 92,000 youth find jobs. This is an important message to get out to our constituents: 92,000 youth. Eighty per cent of the young people who go into those programs in the beginning either get a job or go into

more training. It's extremely important that we celebrate this success story.

Mr Speaker, there are other jobs, but I can see—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I was doing it slow enough that she couldn't see me. Supplementary?

Mr Maves: Thank you very much, Minister, for your answer. You're right: things in Niagara are booming, although we've had a bit of a tourism setback so far this year. The member from Erie-Lincoln and I, along with the Minister of Tourism, will be conducting a tourism round table consultation process this Friday to see how we might be able to get the entire community to help kick-start the tourism season in Niagara Falls and make sure our youth have those summer jobs that they've always come to rely on.

As you mentioned, our youth opportunities Ontario strategy will provide students with work experience that will hone their skills and teach them about the job market. Our summer jobs program helps young people 15 and up find work from April to September, offering a range of services including a \$2-per-hour wage support for businesses and community organizations that hire young people for up to 16 weeks.

Can you tell the youth of Ontario what opportunities are available to them and how these programs can help them acquire the skills they need in order to succeed?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: I'll speak a little more quickly. I hope all the members in the House have this brochure about Ontario summer jobs, Ontario Summer Jobs Ahead 2003. It describes all the different types of summer jobs. This one I hope you're all using.

The Ontario summer jobs program had its most successful year in 2002, with more than 60,000 students receiving assistance or finding jobs. Over the past seven years, our Ontario summer jobs program has doubled, from 24,230 jobs to 60,444 jobs. What's important about that? We invest about \$53.1 million over the summer in these young people. Some of them have \$2-per-hour wage supplements. It provides them up to \$3,000. Some of them are starting their own business. They're entrepreneurs. If anyone is interested in the hotline, it's 1-888-JOB-GROW. Refer this to everyone who talks to you in your constituency offices right across the province of Ontario: 1-888-JOB-GROW. You should have this memorized. It's very important. It's a non-partisan issue. Have it memorized: 1-888-JOB-GROW.

VISITORS

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like the House to welcome in the west gallery today Tim and Freda McCallum and Tim's parents, John and Jean McCallum. Welcome to Queen's Park.

PETITIONS

HOME CARE

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas we are outraged by the community care access centre’s decision to cut homemaking services to seniors;

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

“(1) Provide enough resources to the Manitoulin-Sudbury Community Care Access Centre so that they can provide homemaking services; and

“(2) Instruct Associate Minister Dan Newman to accompany MPP Rick Bartolucci to a town hall meeting to hear stories about what will happen when homemaking services are cut off.”

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr John O’Toole (Durham): It is indeed my pleasure to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham as follows:

“Whereas the province of Ontario has delayed the second phase of the equity in education tax credits for parents who choose to send their children to independent schools; and

“Whereas prior to the introduction of this tax credit, Ontario parents whose children attended independent schools faced the financial burden of paying taxes to an education system they did not use, plus tuition for the school of their choice; and

“Whereas the equity in education tax credits support parental choice in education and make independent schools more accessible to all Ontario families;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully request that the government of Ontario introduce the second phase of the tax credit forthwith and continue—without delay—the previously announced timetable for the introduction of the tax credit over five years.”

I’m pleased to say that this is the very subject of debate in the House tonight, and I endorse this petition.

1500

CITY OF WINDSOR ADMINISTRATION

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly that was gathered by Al Nelman of Windsor, Ontario.

“Whereas the citizens of Windsor, Ontario, have seen the greatest period of sustained growth and resulting prosperity in the city’s history;

“Whereas the citizens of Windsor have been presented with a plan which acknowledges a debt of \$225 million by the year 2005;

“Whereas city council has been unable to control the city’s administration, leading to unauthorized multi-million dollar contracts;

“Whereas the mayor and a majority of councillors have failed to provide communal services and infrastructure maintenance efficiently and at the lowest possible cost;

“Whereas the mayor and city council have been reckless in the use of land expropriation, leading to the loss of millions of tax dollars;

“Whereas city council has used in-camera meetings to excess, thereby depriving the citizens of Windsor of important public information;

“Whereas city council has arbitrarily reduced public meetings from weekly to biweekly, coupled with a five-minute limit for delegates to make a presentation, drastically reducing public scrutiny and input;

“Whereas city council continues to enter into further unmandated risky commercial undertakings, the pursuit of which continues to divert tax dollars from necessary expenditures;

“Whereas there have been cases of criminal behaviour by members of the administrative staff which have been dealt with under a cloak of secrecy, denying citizens their right to know the extent of the damage they have sustained;

“Whereas taxpayers in the city of Toronto have benefited from a forensic audit, the taxpayers of the city of Windsor believe that an arm’s-length investigation is essential;

“Whereas a significant number of the citizens of Windsor no longer trust city council to take care of their interests;

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

“Request the Minister of Municipal Affairs to immediately undertake a forensic audit of the city of Windsor’s finances and administrative procedures.”

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr John O’Toole (Durham): I’m again presenting a petition from constituents in Ontario, and it reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the province of Ontario has delayed the second phase of the equity in education tax credits for parents who choose to send their children to independent schools; and

“Whereas prior to the introduction of this tax credit, Ontario parents whose children attended independent schools faced the financial burden of paying taxes to an education system they did not use, plus tuition for the schools of their choice; and

“Whereas the equity in education tax credits support parental choice in education and make independent schools more accessible to all Ontario families;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully request that the government of Ontario introduce the second

phase of the tax credit forthwith and continue—without delay—the previously announced timetable for the introduction of the tax credit over five years.”

This is covered under Bill 53, An Act respecting the equity in education tax credit, which is being debated on second reading in this House. I present this petition to Lucas, who is a page here in the Legislative Assembly.

INSURANCE RATES

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Progressive Conservative government of Ernie Eves has failed to protect Ontario consumers who are experiencing skyrocketing automotive, home and commercial insurance rates; and

“Whereas the Ontario government has failed to create the regulatory environment that would adequately protect loyal customers in a tough insurance marketplace; and

“Whereas the Harris-Eves government has twice introduced ineffective legislation which has done nothing to stabilize insurance rates in the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas average individual increases in auto insurance rates over the past four years have increased by over 40%; and

“Whereas the people of Ontario are having difficulty obtaining reasonable insurance coverage or are being dropped as customers—even in cases where there has been no change in their risk factors; ...

As a result, “Be it resolved that government of Ontario:

“(1) Introduce effective legislation to ensure those injured in automobile collisions have fair and rapid access to appropriate medical-rehabilitation services;

“(2) Reduce, then stabilize, insurance premiums in Ontario; and

“(3) Improve access to automobile insurance coverage through a more competitive marketplace.”

I affix my signature as I am in complete agreement with the sentiments expressed in this petition.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr John O’Toole (Durham): I’m surprised that Mr Bradley is not sharing his time for petitions with Mr Brown.

It’s my pleasure to present a petition on behalf of this side of the House and on behalf of the constituents of Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the province of Ontario has delayed the second phase of the equity in education tax credits for parents who choose to send their children to independent schools; and

“Whereas prior to the introduction of this tax credit, Ontario parents whose children attended independent schools faced the financial burden of paying taxes to an

education system they did not use, plus tuition for the school of their choice; and

“Whereas the equity in education tax credits support parental choice in education and make independent schools more accessible to Ontario families;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully request that the government of Ontario introduce the second phase of the tax credit forthwith and continue—without delay—the previously announced timetable for the introduction of the tax credit over five years.”

I’m pleased to say that Bill 53 is addressing this issue on behalf of those parents mentioned in this petition.

HYDRO RATES

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I’m pleased to see the Minister of Energy paying much attention to this petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Harris-Eves government has mismanaged the electricity policy of the province of Ontario;

“Whereas Mike Brown, MPP, has been fighting for rural rate assistance;

“Whereas the Ernie Eves government forces Great Lakes Power customers to pay into the fund for rural rate assistance, and rural rate assistance would reduce the distribution bills for customers by hundreds of dollars each year;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, support the efforts of Mike Brown, MPP, to have rural rate assistance extended to the Great Lakes Power service area immediately.”

I’m pleased to sign this petition.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and I might add it’s been approved by the Clerk.

“Whereas the province of Ontario has delayed the second phase of the equity in education tax credits for parents who choose to send their children to independent schools; and

“Whereas prior to the introduction of this tax credit, Ontario parents whose children attended independent schools faced the financial burden of paying taxes to an education system they did not use, plus tuition for the school of their choice; and

“Whereas the equity in education tax credits support parental choice in education and make independent schools more accessible to all Ontario families;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully request that the government of Ontario introduce the second phase of the tax credit forthwith and continue—without delay—the previously announced timetable for the introduction of the tax credit over five years.”

Seeing as how there are a number of constituents in my riding who support the independent school system, I’m very much in agreement with this petition.

1510

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas long-term-care facilities in this province are understaffed, underfunded and ignored by the current government;

“Whereas many residents of St Catharines and of other communities in Ontario are unable to find a family doctor as a result of the growing doctor shortage we have experienced during the tenure of the Harris-Eves government;

“Whereas cancer patients in Ontario requiring radiation treatment face unacceptable delays and are often forced to travel to other jurisdictions to receive medical attention;

“Whereas many prescription drugs which would help patients with a variety of medical conditions such as macular degeneration, multiple sclerosis, arthritis, diabetes and heart failure are inadequately covered by OHIP;

“Whereas long waiting lists for diagnostic tests such as MRIs, CT scans and ultrasounds are jeopardizing the health of many individuals already facing serious illness;

“Whereas the Harris-Eves government has now spent over \$401 million on blatantly partisan government advertising in the form of glossy brochures and television and radio ads;

“We, the undersigned, call upon the Conservative government of Ernie Eves to immediately end their abuse of public office and terminate any further expenditure on political advertising and to invest this money into health and long-term care in the province of Ontario.”

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

AUDIOLOGY SERVICES

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): I received a petition from the North York Seniors Centre. It's entitled, “Listen: Our Hearing is Important!”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas services de-listed by the Eves-Harris government now exceed \$100 million in total; and

“Whereas Ontarians depend on audiologists for the provision of qualified hearing assessments and hearing aid prescriptions; and

“Whereas new Harris-Eves government policy will virtually eliminate access to publicly funded audiology assessments across vast regions of Ontario; and

“Whereas the Harris-Eves government policy is virtually impossible to implement in underserved areas across Ontario; and

“Whereas this policy will lengthen waiting lists for patients and therefore have a detrimental effect on the health of these Ontarians;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand the Mike

Harris-Ernie Eves government move immediately to permanently fund audiologists directly for the provision of audiology services.”

I wholeheartedly agree with the citizens at the North York Seniors Centre, and I have affixed my signature to this petition.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Eves government has increased the fees paid for by seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities by 15% or \$7.02 per diem effective August 1, 2002; and

“Whereas this fee increase will cost seniors and our most vulnerable more than \$200 a month; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Demand that” the Ernie Eves government reduce their “15% fee increase on seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities and increase provincial government support for nursing and personal care to adequate levels.”

I affix my signature. I am in complete agreement.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): I have a petition from residents of 1002 Lawrence Avenue East. It is entitled: “Fair Rent Increases Now.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the number of tenants receiving above-guideline rent increases is growing exponentially, and;

“Whereas many of these increases are for increases in utility costs, many of which have gone down since; and

“Whereas tenants should not have to pay for improvements forever, even when the costs have been realized by these rent increases; and

“Whereas the”—misnamed—“Tenant Protection Act does not give a tenant relief due to the costs being realized or a drop in utility costs; and

“Whereas tenants should not be receiving rent increases where there are work orders issued for the building;

“Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to immediately pass MPP David Caplan’s Bill 134 entitled the Fair Rent Increases Act at the earliest possible opportunity so that tenants can get relief from above-guideline increases once the bills have been paid.”

I truly appreciate these residents sending this petition, and I have affixed my signature to it.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I apologize. I did miss the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I have a petition to present to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the province of Ontario has delayed the second phase of the equity in education tax credits for parents who choose to send their children to independent schools; and

“Whereas prior to the introduction of this tax credit, Ontario parents whose children attended independent schools faced the financial burden of paying taxes at home to an education system they did not use, plus tuition for the school of their choice; and

“Whereas the equity in education tax credits support parental choice in education and make independent schools more accessible to all Ontario families;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully request that the government of Ontario reintroduce the second phase of the tax credit forthwith and continue—without delay—the previously announced timetable for the introduction of the tax credit over five years.”

I affix my signature.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs): I move that pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 43, An Act to provide Ontario home property tax relief for seniors, when Bill 43 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill, without further debate or amendment, at such

time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called on that same day; and

That, when the order for third reading is called, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That, the vote on second and third reading may, pursuant to standing order 28(h), be deferred; and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Mr Baird moves that—

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): Dispense.

The Deputy Speaker: It is dispensed with.

The time will be divided equally among the three caucuses, and I’m looking to my right to start. The Chair recognizes the Minister of Energy and deputy House leader responsible for francophone affairs.

Hon Mr Baird: I would like to ask for unanimous consent if my colleague the Minister of Consumer and Business Services could be the leadoff speaker for the government.

The Deputy Speaker: Agreed? It is agreed.

Interjection.

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): Thank you for your interest, my colleague across the floor; thanks to the Minister of Energy and francophone affairs for the opportunity. The time is going to be split among a number of my colleagues, including Mr Spina, Ms Mushinski and perhaps others as well.

I just want to take a few moments to talk about the importance of this motion because of the importance of this bill, which will bring tax relief to seniors across the province. A particular concern of mine is the seniors who reside in Erie-Lincoln. These individuals from Canada’s greatest generation have helped to build the province of Ontario, helped to build Niagara. Those seniors, at the end of the month, are sitting down with their budgets, on fixed incomes, trying to make sure they can make ends meet, that they can pay their bills. They are trying to find a way to stay independent as long as possible in their own homes, which they have been paying into. I think it is only fair, just and reasonable, and I think it’s good public policy, that we should give them some relief on their taxes.

Bill 43 speaks to that specifically. It will relieve the education portion of property taxes that seniors are paying on their homes, and I believe tenants who are seniors as well. So when you get your bill, you have the regional tax, you have the municipal tax, and the education portion of the property tax would be rebated. Again, I think some tax relief for hard-working seniors is fair, whether they’re in Fort Erie or Lincoln, in West Lincoln, Dunnville or Port Colborne.

1520

I think there’s a big difference, too, between the government’s approach to this issue and the opposition’s.

I know that they voted against this bill in the past. We'll see how they vote on future readings and this motion, but I believe that they will vote against this bill. I think the opponents in the Liberal Party have been rather clear that they oppose tax cuts. They don't believe in tax cuts. In fact, they must feel that taxes are fine the way they are. I believe that taxes should be reduced. I believe that taxes to seniors should be reduced.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): They think they should be higher.

Hon Mr Hudak: The member from Niagara Falls says the opposition thinks they should be higher, which is in fact true. You look at the planks of both the Liberal and the NDP. They will increase taxes, it has been rather clear. I think by opposing this, they will be increasing taxes on seniors in the province of Ontario.

I know the local Liberal candidate, the mayor of Port Colborne in the riding of Erie-Lincoln, has a very clear record. In fact, as mayor he has increased the residential tax rate, according to Ministry of Finance records, by 19% over the past three years, a 19% increase in taxes on seniors who are living in Porto Village, seniors who are living in the city of Port Colborne—a substantial bite out of their incomes, particularly when they're living on a fixed income.

We have different views. Dalton McGuinty and Vance Badawey believe in higher taxes for seniors, for individuals, for working families, for small businesses. We believe in lower taxes. I support fundamentally this piece of legislation that will lower the education portion of the property taxes for seniors in the province of Ontario. I believe it stands as a solid record, in comparison with my opponent, who has increased the taxes on seniors by about 19%. It stands in good contrast, stark contrast to the Liberal Party platform, which would be increasing taxes pretty much across the board, whether you're a senior, a small business or a middle-class family.

I strongly support this motion. I want to see this bill brought into this House for its third and final reading. I'd like to see this passed into law. I'd like to see some property tax relief for the hard-working seniors who helped to build the province of Ontario and the communities in the Niagara Peninsula and Dunnville.

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): Once again, we find ourselves with a government time allocation motion. I would have thought that, given that this bill—Bill 43—was the centrepiece of the government's platform, the Conservative Party's platform, going into the next election, they might have wanted to debate this ad infinitum, or at least for the normal time that it would take to put a bill through this House. But here we are yet again, the government calling for a time allocation motion to cut off debate. That has happened so often around here, it's almost the norm. Whenever a bill goes through this House, it's time-allocated.

Let's talk about the bill, because I think it's important to recognize that this is another regressive tax measure by this government. Very regressive, I say, because Bill 43 will make it possible for the very wealthiest individuals

in this province to receive enormous tax benefit from this bill. People who are multi-millionaires—Ken Thomson, Hal Jackman, to name a few—will be receiving upwards of \$1,500 a month in terms of property tax credit as a result of Bill 43, whereas the average middle-income senior might only receive \$500 or \$600 as a result of this tax measure.

That is why we are opposed to this motion. That is why we're virtually opposed to every tax cut this government has made. Their tax cuts are regressive. They turn the very idea of progressive government upside down. They make it very difficult for people who are living on modest means, of modest incomes, to get by. The seniors in my community are having a very, very difficult time just making ends meet. They remind me of the fact that insurance costs have gone up dramatically in this province—enormous increases, double-digit increases for insurance. If they drive an automobile, they've seen their auto insurance go up an average of 19%, and in many cases much more than that. That is hurting seniors. They've seen their hydro bills go up, they've seen just about every other bill go up, and they're continuing to live on the same income. They're having to get by.

I think it's inappropriate for this government, actually in my opinion it's almost immoral, to give thousands of dollars in a property tax credit to Mr Ken Thomson, who's a multi-millionaire. Why does Frank Stronach need a property tax rebate? I would think that some of these people—I think there are quite a number of them. We name them because they're the most noteworthy and probably the wealthiest individuals of the province, but there are other multi-millionaires who would say, "Why do I need a tax credit? I really don't need this." Would it not be better that we should use this money to help those seniors who are desperate right now, who have no home care? Would it not be more appropriate to allocate those monies for our health care system that is in need of additional resources, that is under extreme stress these days? Would it not be better to help others who are in need?

I think most Ontarians are indeed very progressive, are more concerned about what is happening to our public institutions and our systems that are there to help all Ontarians. They're very concerned about that. I would like to remind members that—and I use the word "progressive" for very good reason—it used to be in Ontario that the Conservative Party of Ontario had ruled this jurisdiction for the better part of 43 years consecutively, post-World War II, until the Peterson government came along in 1985 and defeated then-Premier Miller.

At that time, in 1980, under Bill Davis, they introduced the Ontario Pensioners Property Tax Assistance Act. The assistance act was a measure designed to assist seniors with property tax rebates; in fact, it was a grant. But guess what? This act capped the amount at \$500. It was far and away fairer to cap the amount than what you're proposing to do in Bill 43, where there is no cap. There is no test with regard to income. In fact, the more you've paid, the more you get back. The whole thing

about property tax is that it's based on wealth. It's based on the value of that property. It's landed wealth; in history it goes back.

I believe it's important to recognize that the concept now is turned on its ear. The progressive nature of our tax system has been turned upside down by this government, and therefore there is no progressiveness in any measure this government has brought forward. This is a very hurtful tax credit. It hurts seniors. It doesn't, as I say, help out seniors with respect to home care. In my riding, the North York CCAC is struggling to make ends meet. They were facing a \$10-million shortfall. When I raised this issue in the House, the CCACs across Toronto were facing enormous pressure. They had to turn their backs on many seniors who needed home care to continue to live in their homes.

It would be far more appropriate to dedicate the amounts they're going to grant by way of a tax credit to the wealthiest seniors like Ken Thomson, Frank Stronach and Hal Jackman, to direct those funds, to home care programs in each of our ridings for people who actually need that benefit, who need the help.

1530

Wouldn't it be more appropriate to help those seniors stay in the community? They're having a heck of a time trying to live independently. This measure does not assist them to do that, because it's not directed at home care and it's not going to help people in nursing homes. This government imposed a 15% fee hike on seniors who live in nursing homes. This does nothing to assist them.

Our party is proposing to improve home care. We want to help seniors maintain their independence in the community. That is very critical. I say to the government, if their measure had been more progressive, capping the amount, then I think some people on this side of the House might support the measure. We might stand up and say, "Well, if we're going to help seniors and it's directed to those who need it, then that might be a worthwhile measure and we would give it some consideration."

That is not the case with this measure. It is regressive; it is hurtful; it is using resources in a very unwise fashion. It is yet again another example of this government not understanding that seniors who live on fixed incomes, who are of modest means, cannot get by. The frail elderly need the additional home care. There were 70-year-olds in my riding who were having to take care of their parents who were in their 90s because they had been cut off from home care or did not have access to it. That's the kind of Ontario that we live in as a result of this government's policies. That's shameful, absolutely shameful. To give \$5,000 and \$10,000 back to multi-millionaires is the most regressive thing this government has ever done.

Thank you, Speaker. I'll be sharing my time with my colleagues.

The Deputy Speaker: I just wanted to take a moment to welcome the grade 8 students of St Aloysius School in Stratford in the visitors' gallery, along with their prin-

icipal Herman Koert and Karen Abernot, and they have other chaperones and helpers with them. Welcome to Toronto and the Legislature.

Further debate?

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I want to indicate at the outset that I will be sharing this time with my colleague from Sault Ste Marie. This is a time allocation motion that we're dealing with today, so it has to be Wednesday. Every Wednesday that the two of us are in here, Mr Martin and myself, we are dealing with a time allocation motion. The government doesn't disappoint us again today, as we deal with yet another initiative that truly shifts money from the poor to the rich in just an unbelievable fashion.

I want to say at the outset that our party will not be supporting Bill 43. We voted against it once; we'll vote against this time allocation motion. We'll vote against this bill because what this government is interested in doing is moving money that should go to low-income seniors to those like their friends: wealthy seniors who have absolutely no need of a break at all when paying property taxes on their \$5-million estates.

Our argument would also be that the \$450 million the government proposes to put out through this initiative, along with the \$15 million that it will cost just to administrate this scheme, frankly is money that would be much better spent dealing with, for example, the disabled seniors in Sudbury-Manitoulin, who will lose all of their homemaking services courtesy of this government beginning July 23; or with seniors in long-term-care facilities, who last year took a hit of a \$3.05-a-day increase, every day, day in and day out, on their cost of accommodation in long-term care facilities, which this government hasn't compensated them for; and with any number of other initiatives for seniors that, frankly, we should be dealing with instead of giving money to wealthy seniors to pay for their multi-million dollar estates here in Ontario and other places in the province.

Let me begin by saying that I listened to the debate two nights ago and heard any number of government members say, and try to have people who were watching believe, that there's absolutely nothing in place in terms of a credit to assist seniors who are struggling with their property taxes, those seniors who want to stay in their own homes but are finding it very difficult because of high property taxes. If you had listened to the government members two nights ago, they would have had you believe that there is nothing in place, which of course is completely false, just not true and dishonest.

Secondly, it was interesting to hear some of the Conservative members cry about property taxes, as if their government had nothing to do with the high burden of property taxes that people in municipalities are facing. I would remind those people who are watching that it was this government that over 1996 and 1997 downloaded 100% of public health costs, 20% of the entire child care budget, 20% of the family resource program budget, 100% of the cost of public transit, 100% of the property costs of property assessment services and 100%

of ambulance services on to municipalities, and cut all funding for municipal roads. This was the government that downloaded all of those things on to municipalities.

The government tries to pretend that because they took back some money on education, in fact the exchange was revenue-neutral. I want to quote from Mayor Jim Gordon, who is a Conservative member. He may still be a card-carrying Conservative member. I don't know that for sure, so I shouldn't say that. Mayor Jim Gordon, of the city of Greater Sudbury, used to be a Conservative MPP and cabinet minister. Mr Gordon and company from the municipality appeared before Madam Ecker's travelling road show when she was doing pre-budget consultation earlier this spring.

This is what Mayor Jim Gordon, Conservative, had to say about how neutral the government's exchange really was:

"The continuing revenue imbalance with regard to the local services realignment ... of 1998" presents major challenges.

"The challenge for 2003 will be to meet the increasing burden of those services transferred to the municipalities in 1998." He gives the following examples. Let me read them into the record:

Example 1: "The continuing increase in costs with regard to Ontario Works and children's services whereby the province has imposed a ceiling on its subsidy that it will pay for administration," a ceiling "that does not recognize salary, benefits, rent increases ... etc and are therefore passed on to" this "municipality at 100% dollars. An estimate for Ontario Works indicates that this" cost "alone is worth \$440,000 in 2003."

Example 2: "The insufficient funding for social housing:

"As you will recall, in 1998 the city became responsible for social housing and assumed approximately 5,500 units. The revenue neutrality of this transfer was questioned at that time and is still questioned today. The 2003 social housing budget, net of CRF changes, has increased by \$900,000. This is due to inflationary increases, capital requirements of the local housing corporation, and increased non-profit housing costs. In spite of the \$900,000 increase, there continues to be a significant gap in capital funding for social housing in general," courtesy of this government.

Example 3 of the lack of neutrality is the following:

"Again dealing with those services that were transferred to the municipality, the provincial offences revenue that was used as an offset in the CRF (community investment fund) calculation was never realized, and as the CRF does not take into consideration lost revenue in provincial" expenses, "this has resulted in a further cost to the city of an additional \$700,000" for the year 2003 alone.

Example 4: "Again dealing with the CRF, the province has imposed an unrealistic salary cap for those involved in land ambulance services; namely 2%. Salary increases today in both the private and public sectors are over 3%, yet the province refuses to move on this cap.

This again will add approximately \$700,000 to the municipal budget."

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The above are but a few examples of where the local services realignment is not and was not revenue-neutral, and continues to put financial burdens on municipalities. In addition to these specific examples, the community reinvestment fund is not indexed to inflation and therefore puts an additional burden on to municipalities like my own.

It must be remembered that at the time of the social services realignment in 1998, municipalities were expected to find savings to make up for lost provincial grants. The total lost grants at that time were just over \$7 million for the eight municipalities which are now the city of Greater Sudbury. Over the last six years, Sudbury has lost over \$42 million in provincial grants.

There you have it. This was a presentation that was done by Mayor Jim Gordon and the city to Madam Ecker at the pre-budget consultations earlier this spring in Sudbury. There is no doubt that the exercise of downloading services and hundreds of millions of dollars of costs associated with those services, while the province picked up education costs, was not revenue-neutral. There you have it from a former MPP of the Conservative Party, a former cabinet minister of the Conservative Party, who is now the mayor of the city of Sudbury.

It was not then, and is not now, revenue-neutral. The reason so many municipalities like my own are experiencing increases in property taxes is because this exchange was not revenue-neutral and because the government did not download the money needed to provide those services at the time when those services were dumped on to municipalities.

The government members who were so interested in talking about how terrible it was that property taxes are increasing and how they have to do something about it have a lot to answer for. It is this government and the policy of downloading these services that are driving up property taxes in municipality after municipality across this province, including my own.

I go back to one of the points that was raised that evening by government members: that somehow there was nothing in place to protect seniors from high property taxes—high property taxes directly driven by this government. In fact, there is a property tax credit that is in place for seniors. It has been providing property tax relief for low-income seniors for some time now. Those are surely the seniors who we are trying to protect and who we want to assist, in order that they remain in their own homes. In fact, there is relief already in place, already existing, to ensure that low-income seniors can stay in their homes.

The difference between what is in place now to protect vulnerable seniors who want to remain in their homes and what the government wants to do, is the government wants to take the lid off the cap that is currently in place for you to qualify. The government will now provide your taxpayer dollars, and mine, to any senior in this

province, regardless of their income, to pay for their property taxes.

Why should taxpayers of this province be paying property taxes for wealthy seniors in Ontario? Wealthy seniors, for example, like Ted Rogers and his wife Loretta—Ted Rogers, who is the cable television magnate—are going to see the tax bill on their \$5.5-million Toronto home reduced by more than \$23,000 annually as a result of this measure. Why do Ted Rogers and his wife need that kind of money? They don't. Media tycoon Ken Thomson and Barrick Gold founder and chairman Peter Munk, with homes in Toronto assessed at about \$5.3 millions respectively, will each pay about \$22,500 less in property taxes, courtesy of the measure that the government brings to us today. Good for them. They really need it, don't they? Annual property taxes on the \$3.6-million home of Toronto financier and former Lieutenant Governor Hal Jackman will decline by nearly \$15,000 this year courtesy of this government, while singer Gordon Lightfoot—whose music I appreciate very much—will save nearly \$17,000 this year on his \$4-million Toronto home when he turns 65 later this year.

These are hardly Ontario seniors who are vulnerable. They are hardly Ontario seniors who need to take other people's tax money in order to reduce their property taxes. If they want to build and own \$4-million estates, that's their business. They should pay the property taxes for their estates. We should not be using taxpayers' dollars to pay property taxes of these wealthy seniors or others. We have a property tax credit in place to protect low-income seniors to ensure that taxpayers' dollars go to ensuring those low-income seniors get a break on their property taxes and can stay in their own homes. It is appalling that we are here today dealing with a tax measure that's going to pay property taxes for the likes of these individuals and other wealthy Ontarians who don't, for a moment, need help paying their property taxes.

I listened to the government try and talk about this benefit for seniors. I think it's worth reading into the record some of the comments from the very seniors' organizations that the government purports that they are going to help through this measure. First of all, let me deal with Judy Cutler, communications director for Canada's Association for the Fifty-Plus, a seniors' lobby group with more than 400,000 members. She said, "This will do nothing to really help seniors who don't own expensive homes. The budget was an insult to the intelligence and well-being of seniors. Throwing a few bucks back isn't going to be enough to provide what people really need: home care and affordable rental housing."

Let's look at what Mae Harman had to say in the Toronto Star of April 5. She is 83 years old, a co-founder of the Ontario Coalition of Seniors' Organizations.

"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."

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

"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 Harmon, whose coalition includes more than 150 groups representing more than 500,000 seniors across the province."

Here's a third example, this time from Ethel Meade, who is the co-chairwoman of the Ontario Coalition of Seniors' Organizations in Ontario. She said "the government is 'very uneasy about getting elected again and they think they can appeal to seniors.'

"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.

"It's a public good that we want to contribute to,' she said, noting that the \$450 million in forgone tax revenue could be used to improve services in long-term-care facilities."

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That's from some of the seniors the government purports to represent with this initiative. They want nothing to do with it.

I think what's also interesting about this particular initiative is that even the right-wing friends of the government want nothing to do with this initiative, are against it. It's worth reading some of their comments into the record today as well.

This comes from John Williamson, Ontario director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, who "condemned the government's decision to enrich the tax break and limit it only to seniors rather than giving all Ontario homeowners the 10% reduction in residential ... property taxes they were promised.

"It's favouring one group of taxpayers over another,' he charges, noting that the approach implies that people who do not have children in school should not have to pay education taxes.

"A lot of people (who aren't seniors) have to pay the education portion of property taxes, but don't have kids in school so why are they paying? If you want to take it to its logical conclusion, younger people don't use the health care system as much. Should they get a tax break for that? It's not fair and it's not right to base tax policy on age."

That was Mr John Williamson, the Ontario director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation.

He also said in a separate article of April 5 in the Toronto Star:

"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.'"

I have two more quotes. I don't know if these people are particular friends of this government, but I can say that clearly they're not friends of ours. They represent the right wing.

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: Sorry to interrupt Ms Martel, but I'd like to introduce, in the east gallery, from Britt school in Parry Sound district, principal Gregg Holmes, Barbara Wahleber, and the grades 7 and 8 classes.

The Deputy Speaker: And of course the St Aloysius school in the west gallery.

Ms Martel: Speaker, I saw how you got that in when you were up.

Let me go back to these two folks. As I said, I don't know if they're personal friends of people in the Conservative Party, but they certainly reflect right-wing ideologies and had this to say about the government's measure:

"Finn Poschman of the right-wing C.D. Howe Institute says it's legitimate for the government to fear that a broad-based property tax cut would simply create room for municipalities to take it back. 'But I hardly think that it could outweigh the longer-term philosophical dubiousness of the overall approach,' he says.

"As a matter of tax policy it should raise alarms,' Poschman says. 'One of the very few commonly agreed results in economics and public finance is that broad support of public education is a good idea.'

"Bankers were also baffled by the move.

"I scratched my head and asked myself what was the logic behind this and I must confess that I came up empty,' says Don Drummond, chief economist for TD Financial Group.

"Typically you don't provide tax relief that is completely unrelated to income. It's a bit strange to base (tax relief) on an age category.'

"Drummond says he can see why a government might want to give property tax relief to seniors, but he doesn't understand why the Tories linked it to education when everyone, especially seniors, benefits from a well-educated population.

"What I find really perverse is that this is not going to help the low-income senior but is going to go mostly to higher-income people who have large values on their property,' he adds. 'That makes the measure even more bizarre.'"

Those are typically friends of the government who have this to say about the measure that's before us. Let me just repeat that: "What I find really perverse is that this is not going to help the low-income senior but is going to go mostly to higher-income people who have large values on their property," he adds. "That makes the measure even more bizarre.'"

He's right, isn't he? Bizarre, unacceptable, ridiculous, whatever you want to use, the fact remains that we

should not be using taxpayers' money to subsidize the property taxes of the well-off and rich and famous seniors who live in this city and others in this province, like the ones I have already mentioned.

There is an existing tax credit for low-income seniors. It should continue to be maintained, because then we guarantee that those low-income seniors, who need help the most with their property taxes to stay in their own homes, actually get the money they need to stay in their own homes. We should not be using \$450 million of taxpayer money to pay property taxes for the rich and famous. That's absolutely wrong.

It's also wrong to somehow suggest that seniors don't want to or should not be paying for education. Education is an enormous public good. We all benefit from a first-class education system, although it's very clear that our education system has been under attack in the last eight years and that we do need to put more money into it, as Mr Rozanski has already said.

But you see, every individual in Ontario benefits from a high-quality education system, seniors alike. I know the seniors who have talked to me about this initiative in my riding make it very clear that when they go to the hospital they benefit from the services of well-educated nurses, they benefit from the services of well-educated doctors. They benefit from the services in our community of engineers who are doing roadwork and bridgework. They benefit, and so do I and so do you, Speaker, every time well-educated people in this province carry out the services that they do every day. So it is just nuts to imply that somehow seniors don't understand the value of their paying for education, because they do; they recognize how much they benefit.

If the government wanted to do something with the \$450 million that's going to go out under this scheme, the majority of that money to go to the well-off and rich and famous who don't need help with their property taxes, the government could do a number of things. The government, for example, could ensure that the community care access centre in my own riding, which is now cutting seniors and the disabled off from their homemaking services, actually had the money to provide those services.

This afternoon and last Thursday I raised a number of examples of seniors and the disabled who are getting their housekeeping help cut; the help they were getting for meal preparation, for cleaning etc all being cut. There are hundreds of seniors and the disabled in my community who will lose that service as of June 23.

It's a lot more effective cost-wise to ensure that seniors can remain in their own homes than it is to force them into long-term-care facilities where it costs two, three and four times the amount of money we would ever spend on giving seniors the homemaking services they need to stay in their own homes in dignity.

If the government wanted to truly do something for seniors, the government would be guaranteeing that the seniors who are supposed to lose their homemaking services in Sudbury-Manitoulin beginning June 23 would

actually have those maintained. The government, I see, is not prepared to do that, given the answer the minister gave to us today.

If the government wanted to do something for seniors, the government would compensate seniors for the \$3.02 increase per day, every day, day in and day out, that they imposed on seniors in long-term-care facilities last summer. That \$3.02-a-day increase in accommodation for seniors represented an increase in their accommodation fees of about 6.65%, well above the rental guidelines in the private market. They wouldn't have been able to get away with that in the rental housing market, because that increase was above the guideline.

So if the government really wanted to do something for seniors, vulnerable seniors, who I heard the government talk so much about two nights ago, then the government would be in here announcing that they were going to compensate seniors for the gouging this government undertook with respect to those seniors as a result of that rate hike. It's clear the government is only going to increase the fees this year in line with what those same seniors would get as a rate of inflation increase, but the government has said nothing about last year, the fee hike of \$3.02 every day that was imposed last September and that's still in effect today, a 6.65% increase in fees. If the government wanted to do something like that with the \$450 million, I'd be supportive.

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There are any number of things the government could do with respect to seniors if they were really interested. They could bring in rent control again and stop seniors from being evicted from their rental units, because that's happening as well. They could actually cancel hydro privatization and deregulation, because the fact of the matter is that's been a fiasco, and didn't that drive up people's bills until the government was forced to bring in a cap last November.

It will be interesting to see if the government's going to do the same as the government in Alberta, which just before the election brought in rate caps on hydro, gave rebate cheques, and then six months after the election took off the rate caps, cancelled the rebate cheques, and people's hydro bills went right through the roof again. That could easily happen here.

There are a number of things the government could do. It was interesting because in the last four weeks the government got a presentation from the United Seniors of Ontario that had a list of about 26 items that they were lobbying the government about, at least 26 items the government could undertake to really help seniors if they wanted to. I will call on the government to do even one of those 26, and those vulnerable seniors might be further ahead.

But to deal with the initiative we are dealing with today, the scheme we are dealing with today, to somehow say this helps vulnerable seniors is just completely false. All it does is ensure that wealthy, well-to-do seniors who have multimillion-dollar homes in this city and others in

this province are going to get taxpayers' money they don't need and shouldn't get in the first place.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): It's always interesting to follow the socialist party in some policy issues. It's amazing how easily they strayed from their fundamental philosophy from when they were in power to becoming the opposition. When they were in power, they imposed things like breaking every collective agreement in the province, called the Social Contract Act—no public hearings, order in council, and all the rest of that stuff. Yet here they cry for democracy.

I'm pleased to speak to our government's commitment to supporting seniors in this bill, the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act. I think there's no better time to let Ontario's 1.5 million seniors know that we appreciate their lifetime of hard work than in this month of June, Seniors' Month. I think it's appropriate that we not only introduce this bill, but that we want to make sure it gets passed this month as well. This is one of the many ways in which this government is recognizing our Ontario seniors' contributions to this province.

This tax relief for seniors act proposes to complete the government's commitment to reduce residential education property taxes through tax relief provided to our seniors across this province. Under this bill, as you know, seniors would be eligible for a refund of the residential education portion of the property tax they currently pay on their principal residence.

This program has been designed to be simple and to provide education property tax relief to all eligible seniors. I want to repeat that word. It says "eligible" seniors. The reality is, as opposed to what the opposition claims, I don't know how many wealthy people will actually be eligible for this. We don't know yet. In fact, if all of them were, it would likely be less than a handful, compared to the 1.5 million seniors in this province who are on fixed incomes. They would be the beneficiaries of this break.

The government proposes to provide this new relief in addition to the existing Ontario property and sales tax credits that are available under the income tax system. It is over and above these particular tax breaks that this one will take place.

Pending approval from this Legislature, the delivery of the payments under this new program will begin in December 2003. They will be able to file these claims for this year's tax year.

Together with the personal income tax age credit, additional support for seniors through the Ontario property and sales tax credit and the benefits from Ontario's personal income tax cuts, this new property tax relief initiative would mean \$2.5 billion in tax savings per year for seniors here in Ontario. That's \$2.5 billion in savings for the 1.5 million seniors we have in this province.

In addition to this tax relief, Ontario is meeting the challenges of not only an aging society, with programs and services that protect the health and well-being of our seniors, but also of all taxpayers. This tax relief is one of many already in place that are being implemented by this

government—not just an empty promise; in fact to be delivered before an election campaign.

Combined with this budget's proposals, individuals and businesses would benefit from \$16 billion in tax relief in 2003-04. Over the past eight years, we have announced 225 tax cuts, including 17 alone in this year's budget.

The rationale is very simple. Tax cuts work. The opposition refuses to believe it, but the facts are there. They support our growing economy, our economic prosperity, and they create jobs. In the G8 of the entire world this jurisdiction led every other jurisdiction. For all the claims the opposition makes that we just rode on the coattails of the United States, the reality is, folks, that we lead the G8, and that includes the United States. The Ontario economy outperformed the United States of America. Chew on that one, opposition members.

To that end, we are proposing a number of amendments to the Income Tax Act that would contribute to continued economic growth in this province. We propose to increase the threshold at which Ontario taxpayers are required to pay the provincial surtax. In other jurisdictions, it is way higher than this. In Ontario, effective January 2004, we will complete our commitment to the 20% reduction in personal income tax and will provide about \$900 million in additional tax relief. It's unbelievable that the surtax rate here in Ontario is \$75,000, that we're raising it to. Everybody thinks that's high income. In the grander scale of things, folks, that's a median income for two-income families, and most families are two-income families.

That's not to say that people at \$35,000 and \$40,000 don't deserve a break; in fact they do. With the previous tax breaks we've introduced since 1995, people earning \$30,000 or less in this province pay zero provincial income tax. Now that our original income tax breaks have been introduced, as well as the others, anyone less than \$30,000 pays zero—no provincial income tax. It's all federal, folks. Whatever income tax you pay, if you're a \$30,000-income earner, it's the federal Liberal government that you are supporting and that should be giving you a tax break as well, just like the province of Ontario.

We are also proposing an amendment that would provide an increase in the basic amount of the Ontario tax reduction for taxpayers with low and moderate incomes from \$181 to \$197. This again becomes effective January 1, 2004, and the amount would be adjusted for inflation. This brings the total—are you ready for this, Speaker?—to 700,000 people who no longer pay Ontario income tax as a result of this government's personal income tax reductions since 1995; 700,000 people in this province, and they are the lowest-income, the most vulnerable, the working poor. So anybody who claims that our tax deductions were strictly for the rich totally ignores these 700,000 people in this province who no longer pay Ontario income tax.

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If they're still paying tax, I say again, my friend from Ottawa, who gets it? The federal Liberals collect. That's

where your taxes are going if you're one of these 700,000 people who benefited from our provincial tax breaks.

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

Anybody who claims this government is not thinking of the seniors is out of their mind, because this government is very conscious of seniors. I think specifically of my friend Joan Pearce in Brampton, who is president of the Brampton Senior Citizens Council. She heads a council that represents over a dozen community seniors' groups, from the Knightsbridge seniors' homes in our area, to the Filipino representatives of the East Indian community, representatives of the West Indian community, and others in the Brampton area. I'm very proud of the fact that Joan Pearce, from starting out as a very strong critic of this government, has really come around to see what in fact we are trying to do. I'm very pleased to be able to communicate on a regular basis with the seniors' council and communicate to them what in fact this government has done and will continue to do for the seniors of Brampton and the rest of our province.

Increased tax support is also proposed to help those who care for infirm spouses or common-law partners. These are adults who help their infirm parents, or adults who help infirm grandparents of modest income stay in their own homes. It's an incentive to help them stay within the dignity of their home environment and not have to be institutionalized.

Together with these proposed increased tax credits for people with disabilities, this additional tax support would provide annual benefits of \$50 million to about 165,000 family caregivers and people with disabilities, providing average savings of about \$300 each. If you know anything about people who are caregivers, that's enough to buy respite care if they don't have it, or to buy equipment or other supplies that that infirm family member requires. That's a big, big help to these people and these families.

These funds could be used to help improve nursing services. They could buy personal care, meals and programs for seniors that are living in long-term-care facilities.

I want to emphasize, as Finance Minister Ecker has done before me, that this new measure, the Ontario home property tax relief for seniors, would not—I repeat, would not—affect the education funding formula. In fact, it has been demonstrated each and every year that the entire funding budget for the school boards has increased. We addressed all of the issues that Rozanski brought forward. He wanted \$1.8 billion put into the system; that commitment is there as of this year's budget. Even while

continuing to cut the education property tax in 2003-04, the government has committed more than \$15.3 billion in funding to further strengthen our education system. Spending on public education will increase to—how much? I say to the member opposite—\$16.2 billion for the 2005-06 school year, more than any education spending under any previous provincial government in this province.

I'm happy to point out to members of this House that honouring seniors is more than just the right thing to do, it makes good economic sense. On May 29 this year, Premier Eves announced the introduction of legislation to end mandatory retirement in this province. Let me quote the Premier's own words on the occasion of this historic initiative.

"Ontario's seniors spent their lives working hard, raising families and building the strong province we enjoy today. We owe it to them to ensure they enjoy a healthy and fulfilling lifestyle. That is why our government is acting on several fronts to improve the quality of life for all seniors across Ontario."

The legislation to end mandatory retirement would promote fairness. It promotes personal choice, and it respects the dignity of older people. Our government listened to the Ontario Human Rights Commission, which made this recommendation. We're acting upon this recommendation and recognize that the time has come to strengthen the Ontario Human Rights Code to better protect our elder workers. Ontario needs to retain skilled workers to strengthen our economy, to keep the strength that's also in the economy. The number of skilled workers does not always keep pace with growth sectors. Capable elderly workers can help meet those demands by staying active in the labour market. Projections point to a doubling of Ontario's over-65 population by 2026. I'll be long gone by that time—

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): No.

Mr Spina: Well, yes, 2026 is 23 years away. I don't plan to live to be whatever age that will be, one hundred and something.

Interjection: You're not that old.

Mr Bradley: I thought you were 38.

Mr Spina: Yeah, I wish. All right, I'll confess, I'll be 80, or somewhere in that neighbourhood.

Amending the Ontario Human Rights Code so that it does not allow age-based retirement policies will allow older workers to choose when they want to retire based on their own lifestyle, circumstances and priorities.

It doesn't change collective agreements. If a collective agreement is in place that says you can and will retire or have optional retirement windows, as we've seen in various places—age 52, age 55, the 85 factor, for example, in the education system—it doesn't impact on that.

Mr Bradley: Oh, it doesn't?

Mr Spina: It should not, because those are collective agreements. This does not make it mandatory. What it says is that it is not mandatory to retire at 65. You must not twist that, I say to my friend from St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: I didn't know.

Mr Spina: Oh, you're agreeing with it. I'm pleased to hear that. So you'll support this.

Mr Bradley: No, I didn't know what your position was.

Mr Spina: Oh, I see. It's very clear now, is it not? I'm very happy, because since we no longer have a pension in this House—well, at least we don't; you do, I know, the member for St Catharines. You've been here a bit longer than us, so you have a pension. Sometimes my standing comment to friends is that I'll look forward to retiring from this Legislature on my wife's teacher's pension, because she'll have one and I will not.

What we must keep in mind is that all of these measures add up to one thing, and that's respect: respect for seniors, for their contribution to Ontario's strength and prosperity, for what they still may be able to contribute and, more importantly, if they want to contribute to it. That's the reason we are supportive of this particular initiative that the Premier has brought forward. Our government is proud of its role also in honouring 1.5 million seniors, and I'm sure colleagues on both sides of the House join us in congratulating and thanking those remarkable residents of our province; people like Joan Pearce and her family and the representatives of all the other seniors in our province.

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In Ontario, we have legitimate concerns about the markets and retirement savings. We recognize the concerns and we're taking action. Our government proclaimed a number of measures contained in the Keeping the Promise for a Strong Economy Act of last year. These measures took effect on April 7, 2003, and include new powers for the Ontario Securities Commission like: to review the information that public companies provide to investors; to make rules to hold CEOs and CFOs accountable for the accuracy of their companies' financial statements; to make rules to ensure the audit committees of boards of directors play an appropriate role in ensuring the integrity of those financial statements; and finally, to impose fines for securities violations and to order offenders to give up the ill-gotten gains from the violations.

The government has also increased maximum court fines and lengthened prison terms for securities offences. I am fully supportive of this. We know that white-collar crime, or the abuse of power in a white-collar industry, is as bad as any other kind of crime and should be punished in the same way. The government intends to propose some other minor technical changes, following which we will implement the rest of the fall 2000 investor confidence initiatives. These include broader rights for secondary market investors to sue, and strong deterrents to poor disclosure practices. These initiatives will make it safer for seniors and all investors to invest in Ontario.

I'd like to refer to an announcement made recently by our government that affects senior Ontarians and in fact all Canadians. Ernie Eves, Ontario's Premier, participated on June 6 in the official opening ceremony for the new Juno Beach Centre in Normandy, France. In Novem-

ber 2002, Premier Eves announced that the government would provide \$1 million toward the construction of the new \$10-million centre.

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): Thank you, Jean Chrétien.

Mr Spina: The member from across the way, from—

Mr Caplan: Don Valley East.

Mr Spina: —Don Valley East, because I shouldn't mention his name—Mr Caplan—says, "Remember Prime Minister Chrétien." Interesting. If you look at the article, how hollow was their contribution? They started out at \$250,000 and, after the project went forward, they bellied up \$200,000, and guess what? It suddenly became a wonderful photo op for the Prime Minister to be there with the Prime Minister of France. Suddenly the feds are right there at the table to contribute to this wonderful monument which stands on the site where the Canadian soldiers landed on D-Day. It will be an educational facility commemorating the D-Day landings, the various theatres of war and the contribution made by Canadian civilians on the home front.

At this point I want to pay tribute to a couple of veterans from Brampton. We have many, but one individual I was very proud and very pleased to hear had the opportunity to go to the Juno Beach ceremonies was veteran Bert Post. In all fairness to Bert, it would have been very difficult to pay for a trip, but do you know what? All the employees of Hydro in Brampton chipped in and paid for Bert's airfare to go the Juno Beach ceremony. We're very proud that Bert had the opportunity to be there. Bert, thank you for your effort, thank you for being there on D-Day and thank you and Carol for being strong members of our community in Brampton. I look forward to seeing you next season at the Battalion hockey game. Do you know why? They have season's tickets right behind me and Clement. They're also good friends.

Mr Bradley: You've got to have a lot of money for that.

Mr Spina: Oh yes, for the Battalion.

Let me get back to the issue. Juno Beach, when fully completed, will feature displays informing visitors of all ages about Canada's participation in the war effort, as well as displays depicting life in Canada today.

More than 21,000 Canadian soldiers landed on Juno Beach on June 6, 1944, at a cost of 340 lives. Another 574 were wounded; 47 were taken prisoner. During the war, more than 45,000 Canadians lost their lives and another 55,000 were wounded. But more than 400,000 of Canada's one million volunteers were from Ontario, including veteran Bert Post.

I also want to compliment another long-time soldier who is very proud to sport his uniform and colours, and that's Joe Sellors. Joe Sellors is a piper with the Lorne Scots. My friend Joe is now getting on in years, but he still has the lungs to belt out the pipes at ceremonies in Brampton, and not just for the Lorne Scots but for others. Joe recently celebrated 60 years in uniform. He signed up when he was 17, and is very proud of the fact that he's

had 60 years in a uniform. We say to Joe, God bless you. Keep going, buddy. We look forward to seeing you and having you around for a long time.

Premier Eves also announced that the government is issuing a request for proposals for the construction of a veterans' memorial that will be located directly south of the Legislature at the northwest corner of College Street and Queen's Park Circle. Major General Richard Rohmer has been chosen to chair an advisory committee that will help select the winning design of that memorial. The project should be about \$1.5 million, and it will start early this fall.

What this all means, Mr Speaker, is that we are serious about our commitments to seniors—and we know you're not there yet, Speaker, so don't nod off on me—to meet their current needs and anticipate our future ones. Seniors have helped build our economy and shape our society. They continue to challenge our perception of aging with their ongoing contributions as mentors, community leaders, volunteers, and as people who have a phenomenal amount of energy for our citizens.

The initiatives I've outlined today reflect only a small part of our government's gratitude to seniors for what they've achieved in this province. I encourage all members to support Bill 43, the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, 2003, to recognize both the contribution and the needs of the wonderful seniors in this province.

Mr Bradley: I think the first thing we have to recognize is that we're dealing with a time allocation motion this afternoon. That is a motion put by the government House leader which would cut off debate on an important piece of legislation, a piece of legislation which should have thorough debate and, I think, public hearings to allow people who are in favour, people who are against, and people who believe that there can be some changes that might be made to improve legislation—to allow them all to have that kind of input, so they can visit places like Brampton, St Catharines, Sudbury, Sault Ste Marie and other places around the province. Unfortunately, the style of the government has been to limit very severely the amount of time that is allocated for public hearing purposes—that is, for careful analysis of legislation put before us. Sometimes there are some good aspects to a bill and some bad aspects to a bill, and I think it can only be improved by public input and by clause-by-clause analysis wherein amendments can be placed to the legislation. Unfortunately, the government is interested once again in rushing legislation through the House.

Let me remind the members of this House that the government of Ontario and the Premier, Ernie Eves, kept this House out of session, did not allow this House to sit, from December 12 of the year 2002 until—May 1 was actually the first time we actually had a question period: May 1, 2003. That's closing in on five months that the House was not in session. Most people in the province assumed it was in session. They see the federal House—the federal House was back in session in January of this

year. So when they see a House, a legislative body on television, they assume we must be sitting. That in itself is an abrogation of the responsibility of the government. That is a denial of the democratic process. Governments, by and large, do not want to sit, because that's the time they're most accountable. Questions are directed from the opposition to the government benches. There are a few government questions asked of ministers. They're usually what we call lob-ball questions, such as, "Minister, how is it that you are able to do such a good job?" Those are the tough, penetrating questions that government backbenchers over the years—including this government—have asked of cabinet ministers. The government really doesn't want the House in session because of the tough questions in the House and the media scrums that are part of the everyday activities here. That is where the media meets members of the cabinet and other members of the Legislature outside to ask us the tough questions. So by keeping the House out of session, this government ends up denying us that democratic opportunity and that kind of accountability for which many of the people in the armed forces, who were just mentioned, died many years ago, for a thorough democratic system.

1630

Second is this constant application of time allocation motions. Motions designed to close off debate are not healthy for democracy.

Third, I remind members of this House that this government, on at least two occasions, has revised the procedural rules of the Legislature. Now, that's dry stuff for the average person in Ontario. They're not going to be leaning forward in their seats when you have a debate on procedural matters. What it means, though, is that the government is able to grease the skids for all its legislation. In my experience in this House, for all governments of any political stripe, the best legislation is passed when it has had the most scrutiny, public input and hearings, clear analysis and has taken some time to go through the House. So if the House had come back in mid-March of this year as it was destined to do—I would have liked it back even earlier, I might add, but it was destined to come back in mid-March—then we would have had more time to deal with legislation of this particular kind.

Another way in which the government has, in my view, diminished the democratic process in this province is by allowing political parties to spend more money during campaigns and to collect more money—that is, to raise more money in individual donations to candidates and parties. That means that money plays a more central role in politics than it should. Remember during the next campaign that there will be two important exemptions. One will be the leader's tour. You can be assured with Mr Eves, the Premier of this province, that it will be a first-class tour, the most expensive tour you can have. There's also what they call polling, which is loosely defined as telephone calls which are made during the campaign. They clearly should both be part of the overall

expenditure cap that is there, but the government has instead changed it to allow money to play a greater role in politics than it should. I must say, with some of the questioning that's taking place in the House, particularly as it relates to the chief fundraiser and the chief contributor of the Conservative Party—there have been several questions on this—that shows what happens when money plays a more important role than it should in politics.

Another way is the shortening of the election campaign to 28 days. That militates in favour of those who have money and will use the public media advertising rather than the on-the-ground foot soldiers, if we may use that terminology, who work on a campaign. Those are usually of greater importance to parties that have less money than the governing party of the day, in this case the Conservative Party of Ontario.

Another way I think there is an abuse of this process, and it fits in with this time allocation motion, is the amount of government advertising that we're seeing at the present time. There's a virtual deluge, a carpet bombing in this province with government advertising which is clearly self-congratulatory and partisan. Any objective observer would conclude that. I'm sure in their heart of hearts many government members would conclude that. That is something that has to end. As a matter of fact, tomorrow I will have the opportunity to present my bill for consideration in the Legislature. I'm sure that if there were a genuinely free vote and free consciences, it would be supported by members of the House.

If you turn on the television set now, you have Premier Eves purportedly trying to get people in the bordering states to invest in Ontario. What it's really all about—because these ads are not running in Kentucky, Arkansas or Utah; they're running in border states, saying, "Why don't you invest in Ontario?"—is a feel-good message for the people of Ontario. My friend from southwestern Ontario knows that cable television and satellite television allow these ads to be pumped back into Ontario. That's what it's all about. Premier Harris did that before the last election. Premier Eves is doing that.

That comes from people like Guy Giorno, who by the way is going to have a major event happening in his personal life very soon. I'm happy to say in this House that our friend Guy Giorno is going to be getting married, and we wish him well. I certainly wish he will take a vacation or at least a honeymoon that will extend well beyond the campaign period of time, and I certainly put that emphasis formally.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: You're right. Conservative backbenchers hope the same thing. I think we're on the same wavelength in that regard.

I don't know how I got on to Guy Giorno's name. I always seem to get on to that name. This is the 1,756th time I've mentioned Guy Giorno in this House. I want to wish him well in that regard, and I hope he takes as much time away from this place as possible.

To go back to government advertising, another kind of advertising we had—I looked at the SARS ads. The first ones from when this government was scared—what's the word I want to use?—silly of the SARS scare were quite legitimate. They said, "Here's what the problem is. Here's what you, the people of Ontario, should do." As soon as they thought they had it licked, they started saying, "Here's what your government is doing," and then the little thing at the bottom that says, "Making health care work for you." The same thing is happening with West Nile virus.

Ontario savings bonds: instead of saying, "Why don't we buy Ontario savings bonds?", they have to say, "Oh, don't you realize Ontario has the best economy in the G8?" or something like that, and they've created these jobs and so on.

It's all an excuse to use taxpayers' dollars to finance a political message, time and again. Even the taxpayers' federation understands this, and even some government members have admitted this.

I remember I was on a television program on Global TV with the Speaker back in 1999, before the last election, and the Speaker, who at that time was not the Speaker, said it was excessive. He said, "You know, I was in the dressing room with the players after the game, and we talked about it and they all thought it was excessive." That's a topic for another day. In fact, that's a topic for tomorrow. I know that if there's any member on the government side who has a conscience, and I truly believe there are members with a conscience, they will be voting—if I may do some campaigning ahead, with your permission, Mr Speaker, I know they will not only be speaking in favour of my legislation, which will allow the Provincial Auditor to vet this and make sure there's no partisan advertising, but they will also vote en masse for the bill I'm going to present to the House.

If they do so, I'll be the first to stand up and applaud them and thank them for their generosity.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I appreciate the opportunity this afternoon to get up and debate this piece of public business we have in front of us.

It's interesting, as the member for Nickel Belt said a few minutes ago, that we're back into our routine we've become relatively comfortable and familiar with here on Wednesday afternoons. Normally, it's a time allocation motion. That seems to be part of the rotation now. We brought in new rules. It takes a week, at most two weeks, to get a piece of legislation through this place—something that will affect all of us, often in not insignificant ways. As the member from St Catharines just said, we just push it through with no consideration of the need for public input and for opposition members to take the time to vet it properly, to have committee hearings, to introduce amendments and to have those amendments considered to see if they're of any value.

These days, legislation comes in here that is usually driven ideologically by the government, with no provision for challenge whatsoever. It's the way it is around here. On Wednesday, we come in, we have a time allo-

cation motion, it's passed, and then within a matter of a day or so, we move to third reading and that business is over.

1640

It's unfortunate, because it adds to that sense out there of cynicism in the public that really they have no say, that their voice isn't important, that they as the public have no power. That's why we have made such a huge effort going into the election that's coming up to highlight the reality of public power and how it's so important that people have their say; that they understand that when they elect their member to this place, their member should have the opportunity to participate fully in all debate about things that affect them, legislation that we pass that becomes the rules by which we all live, the rules by which we interact with each other, support each other in community; and that in fact we should be having more opportunity to participate; that we should be taking more of this public policy out and around the province for hearings so people can participate and give us input and get back to a democratic system where people actually feel they have a place, they have a voice, and then maybe they'll participate more fully, as we want them to, in the elections that come up.

So that's why we are promoting our platform, our proposals, in this election, which in fact contains a piece that speaks to fairly significant change in the way we do politics in this province in introducing a proportional representation approach, where everybody has more chance of having their voice heard; where there's more opportunity for parties of various sorts to come forward, reflecting the multiple interests of people out there in all kinds of things, to be able to bring it into this House, the people's place, to contribute to the debate so that we have better legislation, better rules, better ways of supporting each other and protecting particularly those things that are vulnerable and at risk out there.

Today we're talking about a bill that will introduce a new policy around property tax and home ownership and relief for seniors. As you've heard members of the opposition and my own colleague from Nickel Belt this afternoon, we have some real concern about this piece of public business. We think it will be more divisive than it will be bringing people together, co-operative in terms of what we need to do for and with each other to create a quality of life that speaks to health and well-being for everybody who calls Ontario home.

This is a pre-election bribe, in our opinion, that will give by far the greatest benefit to wealthy seniors with expensive properties. We're asking the question: why are the Conservatives giving rich people like Ted Rogers, Ken Thomson and Peter Munk a gift of some \$18,000 each? Why would we do that? Why would we give money away to people who really don't need it when we need it so desperately ourselves for our health care system, for our education system, to protect our environment, to manage our resources, to do all those things we know are necessary if we're going to maintain a standard

and a quality of life for everybody in this province that reflects the actual wealth that's out there?

Most seniors, in my opinion and in my interaction with them, would rather have good public home care, affordable rents and hydro costs that don't spike through the roof. In short, they need public power. The Conservatives have failed them on all these issues. We have—if people will take the time and go to our Web site at www.publicpower.ca and take a look—all kinds of things that I will speak to in a few minutes which would be, in our view, much better in terms of helping the lot of seniors, including them in the community in ways that are healthy and inclusive and providing them with the support they need in their waning years to live lives that are full and full of opportunity, interaction and joy.

The member for Nickel Belt spoke a few minutes ago about what's happening in her backyard in the area of community care and access, the change she's beginning to detect in the approach they're taking in the Sudbury area. They're no longer going to do home care. She says they are homemaking. She says they don't have the money. Well, let me tell her that it won't be long until they're actually doing what the CCAC in Sault Ste Marie is doing. You see, the CCAC in Sault Ste Marie wasn't one of those boards that got whacked back when the new legislation came in—remember the hostile takeover of CCACs? Our CCAC was already toeing the line and listening to what the government was saying in terms of where they're going with new regulations and the doing away with homemaking. So they're sending money back. They don't even need the money they have because they're giving such little service. It is becoming so narrow in terms of who can qualify and who can't any more that they can't spend the money.

They sent back half a million dollars three years ago. Last year, they sent back \$750,000. This year, they're sending back \$240,000 to the government that they can't spend, because of applying the new regulations. They're doing it by the book in Sault Ste Marie, which they'll be doing in Sudbury in the very near future, and Sudbury will be in the same boat. The government over here will be laughing all the way to the bank looking for new ways to give Peter Munk more money, I figure. They don't want to keep this \$250,000 in public coffers just in case somebody might suggest they do something useful with it by way of community support programs, health, education, whatever. They will want to give it away so that it's not there, and they'll give it by way of tax break again, as they've always done, as they've done for the last eight years, to those in the province who need it the least.

I say, look out, Sudbury. You think it's bad now? Just wait and see what happens. I know in Sault Ste Marie, and I know it very personally, that if they come and determine in conversation with a senior that the senior doesn't need or want to be bathed, for example, there will be no homemaking—no bathing, no homemaking. When you're older, one of the last things you want is somebody who's not familiar to you coming in and doing personal

hygiene-bathing kinds of things for you. Lots of couples do it for each other. All they need is somebody to come in and do a little vacuuming and cleaning and keep the place in relatively good shape so that they can stay in the place longer. That's what they want. That's how we contribute to keeping seniors in their homes longer, so that they don't have to go into institutions that ultimately cost us more in the long run.

If you want to do something helpful for seniors, improve the services that are available, change the regulations, stop this diminishing of opportunity through CCACs for seniors, and put more money in there, not this tax break that's going to go primarily to putting more money into the pockets of some of the more wealthy of our citizens.

The existing seniors' tax credit had an income cap that made sure it got to those who needed it the most. This new proposal actually sends thousands of dollars to seniors with million-dollar homes. It's hard to fathom how they think these things up in the first place, and then how they think they're going to get away with it. That money could have been spent on health care.

This bill also says that seniors shouldn't pay for education. Most seniors understand that a strong education system benefits all age groups. As a matter of fact, anybody out there with half a brain will understand that if you want to have a healthy economy, you've got to educate your children so that they're ready to participate and take part in the economy, become the leaders in the economy so that you can actually then provide the services that all of us will need eventually when we become seniors. It makes no sense whatsoever to be relieving anybody of the responsibility they have to contribute in some meaningful way to the education of our children. In the society that we live in today, one hand washes the other. Families that have kids going to school pay taxes so that seniors can have health care. Seniors who need health care pay taxes so that families with children going to school can educate them. It's called co-operation. It's called working together. It's called, in some instances, how you do democracy well. In this instance, this just doesn't make any sense.

Anywhere you go in the world today, you'll see more and more government jurisdictions spending more and more on education, understanding that investment in education is the best way to invest in your future, making sure that your children are well educated, that everybody is well educated, that we have a lifelong learning mentality about education and that we have the resources to make sure people can get in and out of that system as they need in order to retrain or train and to adjust to new realities in the workplace. Seniors know we all have to contribute. Everybody has to contribute to making sure that is the case.

1650

Get ready for a bunch of ads, I suggest, as the members for Nickel Belt and St Catharines said a few minutes ago. Get ready for a bunch of ads over the

summer about this, because this is part of a pre-election strategy.

As a matter of fact, it's a little weird. The member for Nickel Belt said it was bizarre, or she read a piece out of the paper that talked about this being bizarre. It's a little strange. We came back here a few weeks ago, after a very long hiatus of no public business being done here on behalf of the people of the province, to what the government suggested was a very heavy agenda, but so far there is no agenda. As a matter of fact, what's bizarre and strange about this is that now we're starting to debate the actual platform of the government. This is what the government was going to take out on the hustings for the people of the province to make a judgment about, using this as to whether they should continue to be the government or not, and here we are in the House this afternoon speaking to a time allocation motion on a piece of public business that started out as part of the government's campaign platform.

I'm not quite sure how all this fits. I'm not sure what the process is here. What are they going to do next? What is the platform going to be ultimately, at the end of the day, if they've already done most of what they said they were going to do, what they were going to bring out and propose to the public? I'm suggesting it's really a strange way of doing public business, and I think everybody out there ought to be aware of that.

They're ramming through a bill here that's going to have some significant impact and effect on the resources that will be available to the province to provide education. If you look at what's going on out there you understand the need for dollars in the education system at the elementary and secondary level. If you listen to Rozanski, we're expected to immediately put in \$2 billion, and after that to continue to grow the budget as the need demands and the cost of living grows.

We're in need of some significant and serious investment of education dollars at the post-secondary level. This year we have a double cohort of students from grades 12 and 13 going out there into colleges and universities. We're not quite sure, first of all, if they're going to get into the schools they want to get into and, then, when they do ultimately get in, if the schools are going to be able to deal with them in an effective and educationally beneficial way. There is talk of some schools, yes, accepting all kinds of students, but then ending up with classes of 1,000 or 1,500 kids in auditoriums, watching televisions because they don't have enough professors to actually teach the classes. Is that the kind of thing we want evolving in this province? Is that what we want happening out there because this government, in its desperate attempt to get re-elected, wants to somehow provide to seniors a little goody here that really won't amount to much for most of them but will amount to a lot for some who really don't need it and are quite well off to begin with? Is that the way we want to do public business: divide and conquer; pick some groups that you bestow blessings on and some other groups that you demonize?

In this election we already know that the government is going to pick on teachers. They have already begun the demonizing process. They're going to pick on immigrants. That's already happening. That's again a pattern that we've seen—this is the third time—as they go to the polls. It's divide and conquer. It's the politics of fear and resentment. It's not politics that leads to growth and hope and excitement about the future, in my view, and it puts a bunch of people down whom we need to participate in the economy and in the community if we're going to adjust to the new realities that are out there.

In the bill we have seniors—owners and tenants—getting their entire education property tax rebated. The rebate amounts to 0.335% of assessed value, or \$670 on a \$200,000 house. That's a pretty nice house. There's no limit on the size of the rebate, so a \$6-million property would get you \$20,100. That's where we get into the stratosphere of the Peter Munks, the Ken Thomsons and the Ted Rogers of the world. The Conservatives estimate the cost at \$450 million and the average benefit at \$475. Four hundred and fifty million dollars would buy you a lot of education.

Seniors will have to apply for the rebate separately from their taxes so it will not be effected by the income tax system. The need to make a separate application could mean that some seniors with low education or language skills don't receive the benefit. We've heard, in the not too distant past, of the thousands of seniors across this province who haven't accessed the GIS, the federal supplement for low-income seniors that's available. Thousands of seniors didn't access that because they didn't know about it. This will be the same thing.

The National Post, not a left-wing paper by any stretch of the imagination, also estimates that the separate administration to do this will cost the government another \$15 million compared to the cost of doing it under the income tax system. Fifteen million dollars is a lot of cheese, as the member from Niagara Centre would say. That's a lot of money that could be spent delivering public services and providing education and health care for seniors and students across this province.

I suggest to you that there are all kinds of things we could be doing for seniors and families across this province that aren't included in this bill and that will be affected by this bill in a very negative way.

I introduced to you a few minutes ago the platform of the New Democratic Party going into the election coming up. It's called Public Power: Practical Solutions for Ontario. We have a number of practical solutions that we'd like you to look at where seniors are concerned, seniors out there who may be watching. We want you to go to our Web site publicpower.ca and take a look at some of the sections where we talk about improved home care; where we say we'll protect tenants by freezing rents for two years and bringing back rent control, which would be very helpful to seniors. We talk about tying pensions to the cost of living and protecting your pensions, protecting the investments seniors have out

there in various instruments so that they don't lose their value and, in some instances, don't disappear altogether.

We talk about protecting your savings in our platform. It's very comprehensive and detailed. People should look at it. You've got time to look at it now, because the government has chosen not to call the election right away, as we had thought they might. Maybe it's an ideal opportunity for you to go to the Web site publicpower.ca and take a look at what Howard Hampton and the NDP are proposing: improvements to home care; we're proposing to freeze rents and bring in rent control; we're talking about tying pensions to the cost of living, indexing pensions, which should be of real interest to many seniors out there who are seeing the value of their pensions eroding year after year, as the cost of living goes up and there's no increase for them.

I can't count the number of seniors who come to me and say, "Everything is going up. The cost of housing is going up. The cost of food is going up. The cost of clothing is going up. We have to pay all kinds of fees for our health care now. But our income never goes up. There's no indexing there for us. As a matter of fact, the money we set aside," they say to me, "by way of investment to produce the income money" we need to take care of ourselves is diminishing as well, because they're losing their value out there in the stock market, if that's where you have it.

I suggest that this piece of legislation we're ramming through today by way of time allocation motion is not going to do much for the seniors; this government is going to pretend it will with the advertising campaign you're going to see. If you want to look at something that will be of value immediately, in very practical ways, to every senior and every senior's family across this province, I suggest you go to the Public Power Web site and take a look at what we New Democrats, with Howard Hampton as our leader, are proposing in this coming election. It's really exciting. It's good stuff, and I think it will be good for Ontario.

1700

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): Mr Speaker, it gives me particular pleasure to rise to speak before you today on a time allocation motion about our government's commitment to seniors through Bill 43, the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, 2003.

As I think we all know, the bill proposes to complete the government's commitment to reduce residential education property taxes through tax relief provided to our seniors across the province. I don't believe that this particular bill could come forward at a more opportune time as we officially recognize the contributions of our seniors by celebrating Seniors' Month in this very month, June, and I believe there is much to celebrate. We owe much to the hard work and the sacrifices of the 1.5 million seniors who live right here in Ontario.

The official opening last Friday of the Juno Beach Centre in France, I believe, is a poignant reminder to all of us of the tremendous sacrifices made by those brave soldiers on June 6, 1944, known as D-Day. We all owe

our seniors a huge debt of gratitude, especially those who made the ultimate sacrifice for the freedom we enjoy today. Those seniors are the people who have helped to create a prosperous Ontario of which we can all be very proud. We recognize that seniors are vital to our communities, and we honour them for their contributions.

I am pleased to talk about support for this worthwhile bill and to outline what I believe are some of the many other ways this government is honouring its commitment to seniors.

We're undertaking more initiatives to protect the health and well-being of seniors. Much of what we enjoy today in Ontario is the result of hard work and sacrifices that have been made by our seniors. They deserve, and I believe they expect, our respect and appreciation through the bill we are debating today, as well as the many initiatives that are proposed in the budget.

Seniors are the most vulnerable to illness. Therefore, our government has addressed this and provided increased support to assist seniors who are affected by the many diseases that are commonly associated with aging, such as eye disease, osteoporosis and dementia. To reflect the higher cost of drugs and using our drug programs, we announced that we would provide almost \$200 million more in 2003-04 to cover the increased cost of drugs. Our government spent approximately \$2.1 billion for drug programs in 2002-03, which is an increase of about 112% since 1994-95.

In the 2003 budget, we announced that spending on the Ontario drug benefit program would increase to \$2.3 billion, which is an increase of 132% since 1994-95.

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): How much?

Ms Mushinski: That's 132%. In fact, since 1995 more than 1,300 products have been added to the formulary, bringing the total to more than 3,200 prescription drugs available today. Ontario's drug benefit program is the most comprehensive of its kind in Canada.

We are working to help our seniors in other important ways. To assist seniors living in retirement homes, the province provided \$1.1 million to the Ontario Residential Care Association to support its complaints, response and information service for all retirement homes and home residences in Ontario. The service includes full-time staff to help seniors and their families resolve retirement home complaints and to give information about the full range of service and accommodation options available to seniors.

In the past few weeks I have held a series of crime forums in my great riding of Scarborough Centre. One of those was particularly geared toward community safety for seniors. To help prevent fraud against seniors, the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services provides consumer protection for seniors through regular press releases called Scam Scan, and delivers our annual Fraud Free calendars for seniors. The Ministry of Consumer and Business Services also helps to fund the operation of the Ontario Provincial Police's PhoneBusters, which is a toll-free national telemarketing call centre that educates

the public about specific fraudulent telemarketing pitches and assists callers through senior volunteer counsellors. We all know, I believe, that telemarketing fraud is one of the newer crimes of the past few years and I think it's important that we keep on top of this new kind of technological fraudulent activity.

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing supports an affordable housing program which will provide \$489.2 million over the next five years to help increase the supply of affordable housing in the province.

In August 2001, the Minister of Finance announced that the province was providing a property tax exemption for residences built or modified to accommodate seniors or persons who have disabilities. This program allows for 10% of the assessed value of new homes built to accommodate seniors and people with disabilities who would otherwise require care in an institution to be exempted from property tax. I think that's a very important initiative that encourages seniors to remain in their own homes as long as possible, something that many seniors in my riding have often told me they want.

The province also continues to maintain its assistance to low-income seniors through the guaranteed annual income system, or GAINS, as it known for short. GAINS ensures a guaranteed monthly minimum income for low-income seniors receiving the federal government's old age security and guaranteed income supplement. Approximately 111,000 seniors benefit from this program, which provides a monthly benefit of up to a maximum of \$83 per recipient. Our government will continue, with the help of its various ministries, to provide services that will improve the quality of life for seniors, something we are strongly committed to.

To keep our seniors safe and secure, the province is also maintaining its support of communities. We're supporting our police and other public safety workers who risk their lives to protect us. Since 1997, the government has invested more than \$150 million in a wide range of initiatives designed to create a safer, more secure Ontario for our families, and especially for our seniors. Some of these initiatives include the community policing partnership program, which has put more than 1,000 new police officers on the street. Furthermore, I was particularly proud when Premier Eves recently visited Scarborough to tell us that the government will be adding 1,000 new police officers to our streets in Ontario. As well, special squads have been established to combat organized crime. The Community Emergency Volunteers Response has been designed to become a vital component in the province's overall emergency and disaster management strategy. The program is encouraging retired public safety, security and health professionals to join.

1710

Efficient transit is another important element for seniors, especially of course in Toronto, in their quality of life and communities. This government has a strong and continued commitment to improving transit and highways in Ontario. The government is working in partnership with the federal government and municipi-

palities to fast-track more frequent GO trains on existing corridors, and I'm delighted that there is an added train to the system going through Scarborough every morning, and providing new GO Transit services to cities and towns surrounding Toronto and other new transit services. The Provincial Transportation Investment Plan will provide \$1.25 billion for interregional transit expansion in the Golden Horseshoe region. It will invest \$1 billion for GO Transit base capital needs, provide \$750 million for the municipal transit renewal program—something, I know, is very important to you, Jean-Marc—and invest \$250 million for strategic expansion projects in urban areas outside the Golden Horseshoe region.

For seniors in the GTA dependent on bus services, SuperBuild will help fund the initial phase of a new GTA bus rapid transit system, or BRT system for short, to allow for faster travel across the top of Toronto. The BRT system will eventually extend from the Oakville GO station to the Pickering GO station, through York region. This new network will involve an east-west rapid transit line connecting Durham, York, Peel and Halton regions. It will also include new rapid transit links to the TTC subway system in Toronto, including Kennedy station in my riding of Scarborough Centre, new bus-only shoulder lanes on Highway 403 and new priority bus lanes on key regional roads. The GO Transit/BRT will assist seniors using public transit in reaching their destinations with ease.

For seniors in northern Ontario, the government is also proposing funding to help develop highways. Highways 11 and 69 will be expanded at a cost of \$370 million this year.

When the seniors of today were younger, people often stayed in communities where they were raised. They worked, they raised their families and they eventually retired in their home towns. Today, that is not quite as common. The children of seniors often move away to bigger centres in search of employment and opportunities. This government is committed to creating tax incentive zones in rural and northern communities that will help to attract jobs and investment.

Tax incentive zones will create long-term economic growth and give young people the opportunity to remain in the communities where they grew up. Premier Ernie Eves has announced that he intends to designate all of northern Ontario as the first location for a series of pilot tax incentive zones, effective January 1, 2004.

We believe that seniors want to live in towns and cities that are safe and secure. In the 2003 Ontario budget, the government outlined a number of measures to ensure that people in the province can depend on protection where they live. This means that police and other public safety workers who risk their lives to protect Ontarians would receive additional support. The government will double the funding for women's centres for services that help vulnerable women to find jobs. The funding would provide additional support to 28 women's centres across the province to provide victims of domestic violence with job training, mentoring and

network supports that lead to economic independence and allow women to permanently remove themselves from abusive situations.

I also want to emphasize, as Finance Minister Janet Ecker has done before me, that the new relief measure, the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, 2003, would not affect our education funding. Even while continuing to cut education property taxes in 2003-04, the government has committed more than \$15.3 billion in funding to strengthen the existing public education system. Spending on public education is expected to increase to \$16.2 billion for the 2005-06 school year, which is more education spending than any other previous provincial government.

In addition, this government has provided seniors with a varied and effective support structure, as mentioned by my colleague the Honourable Carl DeFaria, Minister of Citizenship and minister responsible for seniors. The 2003 Ontario budget also provides for an increase of \$100 million in annual funding for long-term-care services. Ontario's osteoporosis action plan provides \$7 million annually to improve prevention, management and treatment. And \$10 million will be provided annually to give seniors access to 15,000 additional cataract surgeries each year. I know there is huge and growing demand for that by our aging population and I think that is an extremely important initiative.

Taken together, all of these measures add up to one thing: respect, respect for our seniors, for the contribution they have made to Ontario's strength and prosperity and for what they may still be able to contribute. The initiatives that I have outlined today reflect only a small part of our government's gratitude to seniors for what they have achieved and for what they have given to this province. Our government is proud of its role in honouring Ontario's 1.5 million seniors. I'm sure that my colleagues on both sides of this House will join me in congratulating and especially thanking these remarkable residents of our province.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): I'm pleased to rise today to speak on Bill 43, which will affect all residential seniors' education property tax.

I was listening to all the speakers prior to me standing up in the House today. I would say that probably I would have been in favour of such a bill if we had only included those with low incomes and also if we had in place enough social housing to respond to demand.

Even though the member said a little while ago that the government is going to meet the requirements for seniors in housing, it is not true. At the present time we know municipalities are looking for programs so they can build homes or housing developments for seniors.

In what has been discussed this afternoon, I wonder if the members on the other side really know the meaning of this bill. The member for Brampton Centre says he doesn't know how many healthy individuals will receive this tax credit. People have been calling my office and we have been receiving a lot of calls ever since the government announced this program. We don't know when it

will come into effect. But I'd like to know, what is it? Is it a tax credit? Is it going to be a tax reimbursement? Is it going to be a tax rebate?

1720

In the bill, we refer 17 times to tax credits. Already there's a tax credit that exists in your tax return for the seniors. So right now I wouldn't say that the government is misleading the people of this province, but a lot of people are telling me that they look at the bill through the Internet, because they were already able to receive a credit for the property tax.

I feel that at the present time we have no regulations in place. Subsection 3(1) is clear. The tax credit "is to be calculated in accordance with the regulations." Where are the regulations? No one is aware. Not one of us who is talking on this bill knows what the regulations are going to be. We don't know if everyone in this province who is over 65 will benefit. In Ontario, we have at the present time approximately 1.5 million people aged 65 and over. I wouldn't say 1.5 million houses or apartments will benefit from this tax credit.

The government is saying that it is going to cost \$450 million. Out of this \$450 million, I would say probably 80% of that will go to the rich. When I say it will go to the rich, it's those people who have a revenue of millions of dollars. They have homes where the value of the assessment is \$10 million, \$11 million. They will probably benefit by an \$18,000 tax credit.

I remember when the government decided, through Bill 210, to send a cheque of \$75 for the electricity during the month of December. That was a beautiful gift at Christmastime, but if you people had taken the time at the present time to look at this electricity fiasco that you have created, instead of coming down with this education tax credit you could have turned around and said, "OK. For the seniors, what we should proceed with is cancelling the delivery charge, cancelling the transportation charge those people are paying for."

Hon Mr Baird: You voted for it.

Mr Lalonde: I'm going to tell you, Mr Minister of Energy on the other side, that at the present time I have Mrs Gratton from Lefaivre. She lives alone in the house, in Lefaivre. Her bill last March was \$1,460. I called Hydro One. What a fiasco. No one seemed to know what they were doing and what they were supposed to be doing. My calculation shows that she's paying an extra \$900 because of that fiasco. It is there. I'm going to fight right up to the end.

The government is going to spend \$450 million. In return, the seniors will have to pay for additional health care. They will have to pay for home care. Also, just yesterday I spoke to the minister. How come the disabled people now have to pay for transportation for the day program? It was all news to the minister. But I did receive a phone call right after noon today, telling me, "Yes, we didn't cut down the services, but we have asked the children's aid society or the services to the children and adults to realign their expenses because they have to give more services." They have to give more services.

So it is the same in this matter here. The people are going to get a credit. In my area, I would say the average is going to be \$225 a year, which amounts to probably \$20 a month. Mind you, they will have to pay for any home care that is required because the government last year cut down 115,000 home care hours to the senior citizens of Ontario. Is this fair? I don't think so.

I have a letter here that was written by Carol Burrows. She's the president of the Council on Aging of Ottawa. I'm just going to read a few lines. "The Council on Aging of Ottawa strongly objects to this proposal. It is wrong to move away from a base of universal support of all essential social services by deselecting contributors from one or another segment of society."

It goes on: "The proposed education property tax refund would seem to be at odds with this theme of building bridges between seniors and younger age groups."

Even the seniors are against that, because they know the intention of this government to proceed with that \$450-million rebate, they will have to pay in return—Mr Bourbonnais, Mr Parisien, and this poor lady, an 88-year-old lady from St Eugène, Madame Brunet. Eighty-eight years old. She cannot get a single hour of home services, not a single hour, because the CCAC in our area says, "We don't have any money."

Also, if I go down to the Sarsfield or the Navan area, there's no way that we could get French services to visit those seniors because they haven't got the funding. They have to take them from Ottawa to drive down to Sarsfield or to Notre-Dame-Des-Champs or Navan. They just can't get the people to drive down.

Hon Mr Baird: Did you promise that woman?

Mr Lalonde: I will promise this woman any time. When Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal Party form the next government, we will respond to the francophone services in Ontario. You've been lacking in giving those services.

The seniors in the rural areas don't have any public transportation. This government has given \$9 million to DiagnostiCare to support them in the x-ray clinics that we have. DiagnostiCare received the \$9 million and decided to close down the x-ray clinic in Rockland, in Plantagenet, in Alfred and in Embrun. But all the time they had the \$9 million to improve the equipment. They sold their company and closed all the x-rays that we have in our area.

Mr Beaubien: I know the time is short. However, it's a pleasure for me to rise today to speak on Bill 43, which is the seniors' tax credit. It's also interesting to follow my colleague from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell. It's always a pleasure to talk with him. It's kind of nice to see him animated today in the House.

There are 1.5 million people in the province of Ontario, out of roughly 12 million, who are over the age of 65. I keep hearing that Ted Rogers and the people who live in \$7-million homes are going to overly benefit, or in a manner that's not fair. I don't know what the point is. In my riding, there are not too many people who live in

\$7-million homes. I think the average price of homes in my riding is probably around \$130,000 to \$150,000.

I would also like to put on the record that 49% of seniors, people over 65 years old, in this province live on incomes of less than \$25,000 a year. Another 33%, which is 82% of the population of Ontario, live with less than \$50,000 a year. So there's no doubt that yes, there's the odd person who's been fortunate in life, certainly more fortunate than many of us, to be able to live in \$5-million, \$7-million and \$10-million homes, and maybe they will benefit. But the large majority, 82%, of seniors in this province live with less than \$50,000 a year. Even more seriously, 49% of those live on an income of less than \$25,000 a year. This credit will help these people maintain their homes; it will help these people to stay in their homes. It will certainly help them a little bit.

1730

Is it going to be the be-all and end-all of everything? No, it's not. But I'm sure it's very difficult for members on the opposite side of the House to speak against this particular bill. On the one hand they say, "The seniors are lacking this." But on the other hand, "No, no. We're going to vote against this tax credit." But it's not unusual for them to vote against any tax credit. For the past eight years, I don't think they have ever voted for a tax credit for anyone in Ontario, so I'm not surprised that they would not support a tax credit for people over 65 years old. I know in my own constituency—

Interjection.

Mr Beaubien: —and I challenge the member on the other side—we're getting an awful lot of calls from people wanting to know, "How do I apply for this credit?" as opposed to saying, "No, I don't want the credit." I haven't received one call in my constituency office from seniors who say, "I do not want the credit." They want the credit.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): I rise to speak on this bill, and I will explain why I and members on this side of the House are opposed to it. It's very simple.

I heard the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex speak about his version of this act. He talks about this as if it's just home property tax relief.

First of all, this type of legislation is fundamentally wrong. Why? Because it takes \$450 million—that's what is estimated—from public education.

What the members forget to talk about, and I've noticed this, is that "home property taxes" means—this is in the bill—"taxes levied under section 257.7 of the Education Act in respect of real property." What does that mean? It means that what we're doing here is a pre-election gimmick to try to buy votes.

I've had calls in my office. As a matter of fact, I've had some letters. Once the public and the seniors understand that this is the education portion of their property tax, they understand something fundamental about a society that is responsible as a whole to educate the young, just as the 30-somethings are responsible for hip

replacements and health care tax. That is fundamentally the reason we are opposed to this gimmick.

I'm going to read from one of my constituents who wrote to me. What he said is this: "What responsible and caring grandparent really wants what Mr Eves is offering in his election promises? To sacrifice your grandchildren's chance for a good education and a brighter future for the sake of saving a couple of hundred tax dollars is the height of selfishness and egotism."

Interjection: He's a senior, too.

Ms Di Cocco: And he's a senior citizen.

I have another letter. This letter states:

"Dear MPP:

"I do not want my education taxes rebated. Our public education system is too valuable to our society..... This is just another step in the systematic destruction of public education." This is what this bill is fundamentally about.

I want to talk about what is really needed to assist our seniors, because, yes, they've sacrificed long and hard and they do need assistance—not these types of gimmicks. What they need is more and better home care. We, the Liberals, on this side of the House, want to ensure that home care services, including basic homemaking and personal support services, are available to seniors who need them. Our investment is going to mean an extra \$365 per person.

We need more affordable housing. On this side of the House, we've made a commitment to build 20,000 affordable housing units for low-income Ontarians, including seniors. That's what's needed.

We will expand seniors' centres that provide social and recreational activities and services to enhance seniors' quality of life. That's incredibly important.

Do you know something? I find it amazing, because what has happened in this province is that we now have higher nursing home fees. Last year alone, it cost seniors more than \$500 each to be able to live in long-term care—\$500 more.

We have lower nursing home standards. They removed nursing home standards that made sure that all residents received at least 2.25 hours of daily nursing care. We don't have that any more.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): What about a bath?

Ms Di Cocco: We don't even have any standards for baths. They're lucky if they get one bath a week. That is what real care is for our seniors.

Do you know what? We have underfunded our nursing homes so that seniors receive less care than other jurisdictions. We have fewer inspections.

We want to talk about caring for our seniors? I can tell you what's been missing here. The government of the day, the Conservatives, have done a great injustice to this province in undermining our care for seniors.

One of the things that really, really offends me is when they propagate these kinds of gimmicks. They do so as if it's property tax in general. They don't even have the courtesy and, I would like to suggest, the ethics to clarify what that property tax is on. All they talk about is Ontario home property tax relief. They make sure the

words "education portion of that" are not in the title of the bill. That is interesting to me, because I don't understand why, if this is such a great idea, the Conservatives don't talk about the education portion of the property tax.

I can tell you that I've spoken to many people, and when I say, "You know, there's a bill coming out, and this bill is going to provide home property tax relief for seniors," everybody says, "What a good idea." Then, when I say that it's the education portion of their property tax, suddenly the tone changes. It changes because we have had a society that looks after its vulnerable, and we, as a society, pool our tax dollars together for education and for health care.

One of the interesting parts of a letter that I received—from a Conservative, by the way—says, "I pray, people, you will show Mr Eves you don't want what he's selling. Vote against him and the Conservative Party. (It is no longer progressive, as it once was.)" Again, this was signed by a Conservative.

One of the things I have to tell you is that it's unfortunate that we are reducing our social conscience when it comes to why we pay taxes and that we turn them into political gimmicks. One of the issues I find hard to accept is this notion that they can be fiscally responsible—they give back all these taxes, and yet they can make everything better.

According to Standard and Poor's, for anyone who's listening, we're running \$1 billion of deficit, because the only way the government can balance its budget is if it sells \$2.2 billion of assets, assets that they do not know how they're going to sell. But they consistently do not accept responsibility for their own actions. What they do is consistently point fingers at everyone else. They divert attention.

I learned a long time ago that we all have to accept responsibility for our actions. We have a government today that does not accept responsibility for its actions. As a matter of fact, it consistently tries to, I would say, not be clear in how and what it is doing. Sometimes I feel like there's an attempt to fool the public. This bill, in my opinion, is a gimmick only to buy votes.

1740

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands):

First of all, people have to realize that we're once again dealing with closure here. Every bill, except the one relating to SARS, that has been passed by this Legislature in this current session has been time-allocated. Closure has been invoked. We have to come up with a better system.

When you think of it, years ago time allocation and closure was a major issue. It is shutting off debate. We've got many, many members on this side of the House who want the opportunity to speak on this bill, and that's being denied by probably the strictest closure motion we've had yet. At least some of the other closure motions have had clauses in them to the effect that if there's a call for third reading, there will be a one-hour debate, a day's debate, or the bill will go to committee for a day or two or three or what have you. What is it in

this case? Nothing. There is no other time allocated that offers any discussion on this bill.

The motion simply states that “the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill, without further debate or amendment, at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called on that same day”—which is something new as well. It always used to be that unless there was unanimous consent, a bill was never called for third reading the same day that it was given second reading. That’s a new addition to the closure.

I don’t want to waste my time with that. I just want the people of Ontario to know that this government, the Harris-Eves government, is renowned for having passed in this House, over the last eight years, more closure motions and more time allocation motions than all the other governments that preceded it in the 130-year history of this province. They’re at it again. This time they’re doing it on something where they’re trying to buy the seniors’ votes in the next election. Whether that election is going to come in the fall or next spring, they’re trying to buy the seniors’ votes by saying, “We are going to give you back the education portion of your property taxes.”

Let’s be honest about it: some people may be enticed by it. It’s a very enticing proposition for a senior. What I found very interesting is that you would think that all the senior citizens’ associations across the province would be in favour of it because it’s putting money directly back into seniors’ pockets. Mind you, it goes directly contrary to the whole notion of government and what government should be all about, which is to collect taxes from people so it can then spend them on behalf of the entire community. We’re basically saying to a group of individuals, “You no longer have to pay for the education costs in this province,” and many senior citizens are, in effect, quite disturbed about that.

What will we have next? Will we have 20-year-olds saying, “We don’t use the health care system. Give me a rebate for some of my health care costs”? And how about people who aren’t driving on the highways, who bicycle around on country lanes: “We want to get a rebate on our highway taxes, or whatever portion goes to the highway system in this province, or to the Ministry of Transportation. We shouldn’t have to pay for that”? That is not the kind of society we live in.

Organizations like CARP have it right. CARP, you may recall, is Canada’s Association for the Fifty Plus. They used to be known as the Canadian Association of Retired Persons. What does an organization say that represents over 400,000 Canadians clear across this land? They say, “Tax credits do not benefit low- and fixed-income seniors and in any case do not provide the 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? Reimbursement for education taxes are welcome, of course, but at what expense to younger Ontarians? And how will renters benefit?”

As a matter of fact, the opening comment on this in the press release that was issued on March 28 of this year says, “Ontario budget 2003 an insult to the intelligence and well-being of seniors.”

Interjections.

Mr Gerretsen: That’s what they say. It’s right here: “an insult to the intelligence and well-being of seniors.” They realize that if you want to do something for the people out there, you’ve got to do it for the people who need help.

Interjection.

Mr Gerretsen: I wonder if you could intervene for a moment, Speaker, or maybe tell the member to quiet down a little bit. I don’t remember him standing up and having the floor.

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Did you finish speaking?

Mr Gerretsen: No, I’m not finished by any means. I think what you’re doing here is wrong, and I think in your heart of hearts you know it’s wrong, too.

Interjection.

Mr Gerretsen: Oh yes, you know it. As a matter of fact, you know this quite well. If you’re going to spend \$450 million on behalf of the seniors in this province, then spend it in the areas where it’s needed. Spend the \$250 million on home care—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: I won’t warn the member for Niagara Falls or the member for Oxford again.

The Chair recognizes the member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr Gerretsen: Thank you very much, Speaker, an excellent ruling once again.

Speaker, you well know where the \$450 million is really needed. It’s not for everybody, clear across the board. It isn’t needed by Ted Rogers, so that he can get \$18,000 back, or by Ken Thomson, \$17,000, or Peter Munk, \$17,000, or even one of my childhood heroes, Gordon Lightfoot, \$13,400, or Hal Jackman, the former Lieutenant Governor of this province, \$12,000, or Hilary and Galen Weston, \$13,735. Those folks don’t need it. The people who do need it are the people who need home care, the people who have been totally cut off.

There was a letter sent to the Premier on April 17 by an organization called the Ontario Home and Community Care Round Table. This organization represents about 20 different organizations in the province. They include the Alzheimer Society of Ontario, the Ontario Community Support Association, Communities for Home Health Care, the Ontario Coalition of Senior Citizens Organizations, the Ontario Federation of Labour, the Ontario Health Coalition, the Ontario Home Health Care Providers’ Association, the Retired Teachers of Ontario, the United Senior Citizens of Ontario and the Victorian Order of Nurses.

What do they say to the Premier? “Please have a meeting with us because we are very concerned that you have frozen home and community care funding at the 2001-02 level.” What has it done? I’m not reading from

my propaganda. I'm reading from their letter, their plea to the Premier. They say, "More than 115,000 vulnerable seniors and persons with debilitating diseases have lost services completely." These home care services used to be available to people who needed them. They are no longer available. So what's it going to do? It's going to send those people into institutions at a much faster rate than used to be the case, at probably a much higher expense than if we were to provide them with adequate home care services.

They go on to say, "The number of hours of service has declined by 30%." In other words, for the people who are getting some home care services, their average number of hours has declined by 30%. "Over six million hours of services for homemaking, personal support, nursing and therapy services have been cut out. Community support agencies continue to struggle to meet the increasing demands of an aging population."

That's the plea they made to the Premier, and the Premier could have done the right thing, the thing a Dalton McGuinty government is going to do, and expend \$250 million in that area rather than giving everybody in this province of senior age a tax credit, as has been proposed here.

There is a tax credit system already in existence. We're all aware of it. It works through the income tax system, and basically it benefits those people who really need the help. If you wanted to do anything for the neediest, and I agree there are many seniors living at a subsistence level, why did you not use that system that's already in existence, boost it up, and give it as a benefit to the people who really need it?

I could go on. There's more money needed in the nursing home sector. I think it's an absolute shame and a travesty that according to the government's own study by Price Waterhouse, which was done a couple of years ago, we rank absolutely the lowest of all the 10 jurisdictions they looked at in the number of hours of personal care and nursing services we provide for the 60,000 residents in our nursing homes.

The people who work there work extremely hard. They're overworked. The people who live in those homes need more care than ever before, and yet we can't even provide them now with 2.25 hours of nursing care per day. The government even did away with that regulation. When places like Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, places in Europe, can spend up to three and four hours a day in nursing and personal services, we somehow think it's all right to do with two and a quarter hours or less. That's why we're at the bottom of the totem pole.

What's it going to cost? We have this information from the Ontario Long Term Care Association—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: I won't warn the member from Don Valley East or the member from Ottawa-Carleton again. The Chair recognizes the member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr Gerretsen: Thank you very much, Speaker, again, for an excellent ruling.

What do the Ontario Long Term Care Association and the Ontario non-profit homes association say? They say if we want to increase nursing and personal care standards in nursing homes for the seniors who truly need the services, we need to expend another \$225 million. You put the \$225 million that's needed in the nursing home sector to bring it up to quality standards and you take the \$250 million that's required in the community care sector in this province, and you've got your \$450 million.

I say to the government members, don't try to buy this election by buying the seniors' vote. You're doing the wrong thing. Help those people who really need the help.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Baird has moved government notice of motion number 53. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1752 to 1802.

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

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Gill, Raminder	Mushinski, Marilyn
Baird, John R.	Guzzo, Garry J.	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Hardeman, Ernie	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Beaubien, Marcel	Hudak, Tim	Runciman, Robert W.
Chudleigh, Ted	Jackson, Cameron	Sampson, Rob
Clark, Brad	Johns, Helen	Spina, Joseph
Clement, Tony	Kells, Morley	Sterling, Norman W.
Coburn, Brian	Klees, Frank	Tascona, Joseph N.
Cunningham, Dianne	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tsubouchi, David H.
DeFaria, Carl	Maves, Bart	Turnbull, David
Ecker, Janet	Mazzilli, Frank	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Elliott, Brenda	McDonald, AL	Wilson, Jim
Flaherty, Jim	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Galt, Doug	Molinari, Tina R.	Young, David
Gilchrist, Steve	Munro, Julia	

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

Nays

Bartolucci, Rick	Curling, Alvin	Martin, Tony
Bountrogianni, Marie	Di Cocco, Caroline	McGuinty, Dalton
Boyer, Claudette	Duncan, Dwight	McMeekin, Ted
Bradley, James J.	Gerretsen, John	Peters, Steve
Brown, Michael A.	Kennedy, Gerard	Phillips, Gerry
Bryant, Michael	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Caplan, David	Kwinter, Monte	Pupatello, Sandra
Churley, Marilyn	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramsay, David
Colle, Mike	Levac, David	Ruprecht, Tony
Conway, Sean G.	Marchese, Rosario	Smitherman, George
Cordiano, Joseph	Martel, Shelley	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 44; the nays are 32.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It being well after 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1805.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller

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

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

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

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

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

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

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Estimates / Budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Gerard Kennedy
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Alvin Curling
Gilles Bisson, Ted Chudleigh, Alvin Curling,
Gerard Kennedy, Frank Mazzilli, Norm Miller,
John R. O'Toole, Steve Peters
Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Finance and economic affairs /
Finances et affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Joseph Spina
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Ted Arnott
Ted Arnott, Marcel Beaubien,
David Christopherson, Monte Kwinter,
John O'Toole, Gerry Phillips,
Rob Sampson, Joseph Spina
Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

General government / Affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: Steve Gilchrist
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Norm Miller
Marilyn Churley, Mike Colle,
Garfield Dunlop, Steve Gilchrist, Dave Levac,
Norm Miller, R. Gary Stewart, Wayne Wettlaufer
Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

Government agencies / Organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: James J. Bradley
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Michael Gravelle
James J. Bradley, Leona Dombrowsky, Michael Gravelle,
Bert Johnson, Tony Martin, Frank Mazzilli,
Wayne Wettlaufer, Bob Wood
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

Justice and Social Policy / Justice et affaires sociales

Chair / Présidente: Toby Barrett
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: AL McDonald
Toby Barrett, Marcel Beaubien, Michael Bryant,
Garry J. Guzzo, Ernie Hardeman,
Peter Kormos, AL McDonald, Lyn McLeod
Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Legislative Assembly / Assemblée législative

Chair / Présidente: Margaret Marland
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Julia Munro
Caroline Di Cocco, Jean-Marc Lalonde,
Margaret Marland, Bart Maves,
Julia Munro, Marilyn Mushinski,
Michael Prue, Joseph N. Tascona
Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

Public accounts / Comptes publics

Chair / Président: John Gerretsen
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Bruce Crozier
Bruce Crozier, Garfield Dunlop,
John Gerretsen, Raminder Gill,
John Hastings, Shelley Martel,
AL McDonald, Richard Patten,
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

**Regulations and private bills /
Règlements et projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Rosario Marchese
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Claudette Boyer, Garfield Dunlop,
Raminder Gill, Pat Hoy, Morley Kells, Rosario Marchese, Ted
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Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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