



ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Fourth Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Quatrième session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 5 June 2003

Jeudi 5 juin 2003

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

Hansard on the Internet

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

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

Index inquiries

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

Copies of Hansard

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

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

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

Renseignements sur l'index

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

Exemplaires du Journal

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



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 5 June 2003

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 5 juin 2003

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should support the principle of greater accountability for politicians at the municipal level and consult with the Association of Municipalities, and municipalities, on how municipal politicians can be subject to the similar legislated requirements of public disclosure, accountability, and independent investigation with which all members of the Legislative Assembly and executive council currently comply.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Mr Christopherson has moved ballot item number 11, private member's notice of motion number 9. The member for Hamilton West has up to 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Christopherson: I appreciate the opportunity to address this issue.

Let me just say at the outset that I'm going to be pretty shocked, quite frankly, if this doesn't end up being motherhood. So my 10 minutes are going to be based on the fact that I expect this will be seen as such and that it would have the support of the House. I'll be very interested in any member who is going to stand in their place and suggest that, somehow, we ought not have any kind of accountability at all at the municipal level, which, quite frankly, is the way it is right now.

Again, to be very frank and upfront, the reason this is here, as many will know, is that I'm contemplating a return to the municipal world of politics. What I've found interesting, and shocking in many ways, was that having been here for 13 years, a number of those years as a member of the executive council in cabinet, I have, like every other member of this place, gone every year to meet with the Integrity Commissioner, formerly known as the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, to lay out—modest as it is—my entire financial situation: all your credit cards, all the money that you owe, any money you might have, any stocks, RRSPs, and also if you have guaranteed any loans. The whole purpose of that is so that it's easy for the public or another member of the

Legislature to quickly determine whether or not there has been a conflict of interest.

I can't count the number of times that I have seen matters referred to the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, now the Integrity Commissioner, and once that response comes back, that's the end of it. Whatever the answer is, whether further action needs to be taken or whether it's determined that there wasn't a conflict of interest, it is dealt with efficiently, quickly, and in a way that everyone considers all of the ethical matters to be dealt with and the whole thing to be transparent and honourable.

Yet when I think about a possible return to city council, I go from being a backbencher in the third party with about as little power as you can have in this place and having full disclosure of any kind of financial arrangement, entanglement, connection that I might have with anybody or anything in the world, to being possibly a member of a city council—in the case of Hamilton, an operating budget of over \$1 billion a year—where I don't have to disclose anything. Not one shred of my personal finances or my personal financial arrangements with anybody is registered anywhere. Here we go from being a backbencher in the third party with full disclosure every year for 13 years, to being on a council responsible for \$1 billion a year, and you don't have to tell anyone what any of your business is.

How does this affect the public? Right now, any member of the public or any member of this Legislature can contact the Integrity Commissioner and say, "I believe there's been a possible conflict of interest here. I'd like it looked into," and it is. That's really all you need to do. But under the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act—and there is one, but it's relatively toothless because it's all on the individual—if you, the public, have a concern about a member of council anywhere in Ontario, you have to go to a judge, and there are time limits to be met.

For the average person, going to a judge is a huge deal, not to mention the fact that there are costs involved, if nothing else, possibly time off work in order to follow up. You've got to make the entire case. That's an awful lot to ask of a member of the public who has reason to think there may be something untoward here that needs to be looked at. They're expected to go from concern about something all the way to the courts. It makes no sense whatsoever.

How did we get to this situation? I suspect the reason we haven't followed in lockstep—because the feds do the same thing; MPs have a similar process to what we have here—is that, going back 100 years, municipalities were not a large government in their own right. Their budgets

were usually fairly small. The matters involved were small. Everybody knew everybody, and it was pretty hard to pull something off unless the whole town or village was in on the deal.

But now the top five municipalities in Ontario have incredible populations and budgets that go with them: Toronto, 2.5 million people; Ottawa, 740,000 people; Mississauga, 600,000; my hometown of Hamilton, over 500,000 people; London, 330,000 people. Some of those cities are bigger than provinces, and the budgets that go with them.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): Some countries.

Mr Christopherson: I just heard my friend say, "Some countries." That's true.

Municipal budgets—and these are round figures: the operating budget for the city of Toronto in 2002 was roughly \$6.2 billion. Backbencher, third party, Ontario Legislature: full financial disclosure, total and complete, and the ability to follow up with questions; a budget of \$6.2 billion, and not one member of that council, including the mayor, has to do anything at all, let alone anything close to what we do here.

1010

Ottawa: an operating budget of \$1.8 billion. That's a lot of money. Mississauga: well over \$1 billion. Hamilton: we just crossed over the line; we now have an operating budget of over \$1 billion. Toronto's budget is almost as big as the entire provincial budget of Alberta. Hamilton's budget is almost as big as that of Newfoundland and Labrador. Yet every single province in this country, including PEI, which has a population of, what, something under 150,000, has some process of an Integrity Commissioner type of office where you make those disclosures and then the public has the accessibility and the transparency as they have here in Ontario. And you would expect that. I think we'd all be shocked to find out that the province of Alberta or Newfoundland and Labrador, or any other province for that matter, would not have some type of Integrity Commissioner where we have to disclose our financial connections so that the public can be satisfied that everything is being done above-board. Yet we allow a situation to exist where those provinces that have a smaller population and a smaller budget, less money they're responsible for, less money they can give out than many of our major municipalities, have the Integrity Commissioner and the municipalities don't.

That's the core of this, Speaker, and that's why I'm not suggesting for a minute that it's anything radical or wild-eyed. I had looked at coming out with something a little more detailed, an actual bill that tied the municipalities to our Integrity Commissioner, but Linda Mitchell in my office placed a call to the commissioner's office and we found out, like most things, it's not that straightforward and their ability to handle that kind of workload was questionable.

So rather than get into the details of it, which quite frankly is also easy to knock down—you can find one part of the bill you don't like and you can vote against

it—in this case all I've done is make a very straightforward statement that I'm asking this House to adopt whereby we say that the government of Ontario, regardless of the political stripe, has an obligation to begin the process of contacting AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, and other municipalities and municipal leaders, to begin the process of taking municipal expenses and finances and budgeting and bringing them into the same arena of light and transparency and accountability that we have here, that we in this House call on the government of the day to begin that process. Democracy calls for it; fairness calls for it. The public right to know the financial connections of their politicians is also at stake here, and I would urge my colleagues to send that strong message.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm pleased to indicate my support for the motion and say I think it's a good step forward.

The public hold politicians in relatively low esteem. We all look at the public opinion polls, and we're right down near the bottom in terms of the respect people have for various professions. You also see that the percentage of people who vote in each election is trending downward. It's true federally, it's true provincially, it's true municipally. There's the odd blip in it, but by and large it's trending downward, and it's because, I think, people increasingly are losing confidence in their democratic institutions. Every one of us has heard the comment, "All you politicians are dishonest." We tend to get brushed with the same stroke, so anything we can do that helps to restore the sense of confidence that the public have in politicians is a good step forward.

Mr Christopherson is right: each year, all the members of the Legislature are required to file with the Integrity Commissioner quite an extensive background on the various assets we have, and then we meet every year with the Integrity Commissioner, who has gone over our file, and answer questions. As Mr Christopherson said, we then, if there is an issue raised here in the Legislature about a conflict of interest about any of us, have a vehicle for doing that. So I think it's a good step to look at a similar mechanism for our municipalities and to seek the advice of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario.

I would say, however, that I think in many respects the Legislature is far more secretive and far less open than municipalities are, and there are many members of all parties whose background is municipal politics. You would never get away, municipally, with many of the things that we find happen here in the Legislature in terms of secrecy and lack of access and openness. I go back to the "budget presentation" that was made this year by the Premier; it wasn't even done here in the Legislature. The Legislature was supposed to have been sitting—the public should be aware. On December 12, we left the Legislature. We did not come back until May. The Legislature was supposed to sit in the month of March, but the Premier decided no, and he passed a resolution. He simply said, "We're not going to sit,"

because if we'd been sitting, we would have had the budget here. Then he presented the "budget" not here in the Legislature but at the Magna facilities, a private company.

As I say, I'm supportive of Mr Christopherson's motion. I think it will add in some ways to an increased sense of confidence by the public in municipal politicians, and so I will support it. But I would say to all of us that in many respects we're far worse than municipalities here in terms of openness and access and public scrutiny of what we do. Nothing could be more clear than the nerve to present the key document, the budget, not here in the Legislature but at Magna.

The even more shocking thing to me was, when the Speaker found the government in contempt of the Legislature by doing that, I was convinced that the government would say, "Mr Speaker, we appreciate your view on this, we accept your view on it, and we will commit from now forward to present the budget to the Legislature." But the government said, "No, we don't even agree with the Speaker. We'll do whatever we want. If we want to present the budget anywhere we want, at any time, we'll do it." They essentially just thumbed their nose at the Speaker and, more importantly, at the public.

As I say, Mr Christopherson's motion is a sensible one. It will make, I think, some difference in terms of public confidence in municipal politicians. But I would say that as he moves on to another career, we have in many respects far more to do here to correct our own House than the municipalities have to do.

Mr Rob Sampson (Mississauga Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to, if I could, recognize the young boys and girls from Heritage Christian School from Jordan Station. Thanks for coming and watching today.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It seems petty, but there were about 30 seconds off the clock between when he sat down and the point of order, and the clock kept running. I am just asking if you can put that back on.

The Acting Speaker: We're going to fix that. That will be restored.

The member for Niagara Centre.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): New Democrats, of course, enthusiastically support this resolution. Indeed, one would expect nothing less from Mr Christopherson. Think about it: Mr Christopherson, as a potential mayoralty candidate in the city of Hamilton, will be the only one of those mayoralty candidates about whom the public can determine, by virtue of simply coming to the Clerk's office here at Queen's Park, his assets, his liabilities, his holdings, his financial interests etc, because he has made that full declaration as a result of being a member of this Legislative Assembly.

1020

As well, I'm confident in suggesting that Mr Christopherson's authorship and presentation of this resolution today is indicative of his style not only here but when it comes to municipal politics. Mr Christopherson is calling

for public disclosure by municipal politicians, for greater accountability and the availability of independent investigation.

I want to indicate clearly, certainly to folks in Hamilton, that that is obviously what they can expect from Mr Christopherson as mayor of the city of Hamilton. That speaks well for the residents of Hamilton. The leadership inherent in this resolution should, I put to you, be emulated by municipal politicians in every other region and municipality in the province of Ontario.

It's been many years ago now, but I too served as a city councillor, in the city of Welland. While some members of council and mayors make voluntary disclosures, others are oh so reluctant to provide even the most modest of disclosures. That, I put to you, speaks volumes and should be cause for great concern.

What Mr Christopherson is proposing today is that there be a common standard across the province and that every municipal politician—mayor, councillor or reeve, whether it's big-city Ontario or small-town Ontario—should be subjected to the same standard. This isn't to be malicious. It isn't to discourage people from entering municipal politics. Indeed, it's to give members of the public—voters, taxpayers, residents of every municipality in this province—an opportunity to really know whom they're electing and, quite frankly, to assess the positions those councillors or mayors take in the context of what financial interests they may have and what financial interests they may be advancing by virtue of positions they take.

We have a new Municipal Act, which, once again, has conflict-of-interest provisions in it. Regrettably, I believe that many municipal politicians are overly cautious and have been intimidated into too-frequent declarations of conflict of interest. I also believe there are more than a few municipal politicians who hide behind a declaration of conflict of interest to avoid taking a position on contentious or sensitive issues.

The provision being promoted by Mr Christopherson will, quite frankly, help to clarify what indeed is a conflict of interest and help to assure those councillors who, as I say, feel somewhat intimidated by overly cautious advice or overly cautious positions they adopt. It will relieve them of that, because the public will know. There will be a full disclosure as to what financial interests that person has, and frankly financial interests that are related to intimate family members.

I suggest it would be delinquent of any member of this assembly not to support this resolution; indeed this resolution should be passed unanimously.

I also feel incredibly comforted that Mr Christopherson identifies this as part of his agenda in terms of his pursuit of the position of mayor of the city of Hamilton. I call upon other mayors and other municipal politicians to follow his example.

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I am pleased to rise this morning to support the resolution put forth by the member for Hamilton West. I think a measure of this kind is long overdue.

There are many who say that in many ways our municipal politicians are closer to the electorate than any level of government, and I have to agree with that. More importantly, some of the matters that municipal politicians deal with affect the everyday lives of many of our constituents, and they play an important function. I think this government has recognized that more responsibility should be given to our municipal representatives in that they play such a great role in the lives of Ontario citizens.

Commensurate with that, I think there is an obligation, however, to bring the standards of integrity up to the same level as MPPs. That's not to say that the vast majority do not act in the manner of MPPs. They do. I recognize them and I congratulate the members of my municipal councils in Cambridge, Kitchener and North Dumfries—all part of my riding—who work very hard on behalf of the people and do their very best. They are to be congratulated.

However, although they are presently covered by the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act, which requires them to disclose pecuniary interests in any matter before council and to abstain from voting or trying to influence the matter, that may not go far enough because it does not deal with their personal business, which we as MPPs must reveal to the Integrity Commissioner.

Municipalities are also subject to the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. I have to agree with some of the comments made that perhaps some municipal councillors seem to be or are perceived to be somewhat cautious in declaring a conflict of interest where perhaps none exists in actual legal fact. On the other hand, that is a healthy situation. They are concerned, not just with doing what is right but being perceived as doing what is right. I know all municipal councillors share that belief, and that is an important function.

However, Mr Christopherson's resolution, as mentioned, goes further than that and brings the level of disclosure of assets to the level of MPPs. I think that is an important step in our province. It's a step that I believe the vast majority if not all municipal councillors would welcome, because they are as concerned as us with the public perception of elected representatives in this province, and I think that is a most healthy situation.

Mr Agostino: I am pleased to rise in support of the resolution of my good friend and colleague Mr Christopherson from Hamilton West. I think it's timely, with the municipal elections coming. I am pleased to tell you that I am certainly very supportive—and will support Mr Christopherson's bid for mayor—along with my colleague Marie Bountrogianni from Hamilton Mountain, because we believe this resolution reflects the type of integrity we need to bring back at the city council level across this province.

I spent seven years on city council in Hamilton, a number of those with David. The role of municipalities and the role of city councils has changed dramatically over the years, and unfortunately the legislation has not kept up with that. Frankly, the accountability that should

be there is not there. It's important because it's not only the perception but also the reality of the situation where councils are dealing with some very, very major issues today, compared to, say, 20 or 30 years ago. A city council, with a zoning application, can literally take a useless piece of land and turn it into something worth tens of millions of dollars. The nature of the decisions that are made and the size of the budgets have changed dramatically.

1030

The conflict-of-interest legislation as it now exists has very little investigative power. Often, the first line in some municipal acts is a city clerk, who of course reports to those city councillors who are there. There is very little in legislation that prohibits councillors from doing business with the city, a significant amount of business. There is no mechanism for knowing which councillors own what companies that may do business with the city of Hamilton. It's simply left to the discretion of the individuals. In this age where the public expects transparency, where the public expects openness in government, our Municipal Act has unfortunately failed badly and has not kept up with that.

Let's understand: unlike us on the opposition side of the House—we don't have a lot of power to change or make laws here—city councillors, in a sense, are almost in a cabinet, like an executive council, because decisions are made collectively. They vote, they make a decision, and the balance of power is there, unlike in our system here, where we're held to a much higher standard, even on the opposition side of the House, than city councillors, who in a sense have many of the same powers that a cabinet minister would or the executive council of the province of Ontario would.

It's important to ensure we restore the faith. Politicians have taken a beating over the years, much of it deserved, some of it not deserved. Every step we can take to restore that trust, that public confidence, that sense in people that people don't get into politics for themselves or for their own personal gain but to help make a better community, a better place to live, a better province, any steps we can take to restore that faith in our political system I think will go a long way toward enhancing that. The act and the changes that have occurred over the years have not kept up.

Another area where I'd like to see some changes is in the powers, for example, of the mayor. We have a situation in the act today where the mayor has one vote, as every other councillor does. A mayor in the city of Hamilton, who may get 200,000 or 250,000 votes, has the same voting power as a councillor who will get elected with 3,000 or 4,000 votes in one particular ward. The situation in the city of Toronto is much greater than that.

As we look at this legislation, I think we need to also go beyond that and look at whether there is an opportunity to change the act to give the mayor some extra powers. In a sense, the mayor of a municipality has the mandate of all of the people, the basic representation of

all of the people in that municipality. I think that's important and I would like to see that changed, because I think it's often frustrating. You look to a mayor for leadership, and of course it's the power, the ability to bring people together, that clout of the office of mayor and your ability to work with council that allows you as mayor of a city to make changes and bring things forward. But frankly, when push comes to shove in the voting and the ability to get things done, unless you can convince a majority of your colleagues on any issue, anything from a stop sign to hiring a department head, you absolutely have no power, or very little clout. So I think it's important when we look at that to look at that evolution as well.

I think this piece of legislation is well worth it. It would be a great change if we bring it forward. I think it will help restore the sense of confidence in municipal councils. I congratulate Mr Christopherson for bringing this forward, and hopefully this will pass unanimously today.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I rise today as well in support of this resolution. I had, as the members of this House will know, the opportunity to serve on the new megacity of the city of Toronto for nearly four and a half years before resigning to come to this august place. I will tell you that in those initial years of a new and extremely large city there was a lot of discussion on how to preserve integrity. There was a lot of discussion on how to make sure financial transactions were above-board.

I was very proud to have served on the committee that recommended an auditor general for the city of Toronto to make sure that monies that were being expended on behalf of the people of that city were expended wisely. The city of Toronto made a good decision in going from a system that most municipalities in Ontario use, which is independent outside auditors, to one that was internal, and appointed one of their own to head it up.

I was less successful in my attempts to get an integrity commissioner for the city of Toronto. In fact, shortly after the time that I left, that entire idea was nixed.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): You should have stayed.

Mr Prue: No, I'm not sure it would have made any difference.

I do know that during that entire period, at the start of every council meeting there was a call for conflicts of interest, when the councillors and the mayor would stand up individually and recognize those things for which they believed they may have a conflict of interest. Sometimes they ranged from the silly and the bizarre—where people were claiming conflicts that were obviously not covered by the Municipal Act, in an attempt to get out of controversial issues, or simply to be able to get an afternoon off, if there was a long debate anticipated—to those that there were heartfelt and absolutely true.

But what always troubled me and troubled most of the members who were elected to the city of Toronto council was there were often times when we felt that there were

conflicts there but the members did not stand up. We did not have the authority to challenge them; we could not do so. Even the council itself could not challenge that someone had a conflict. That was left up to the courts and to another entire process that was devoid of and outside the council's responsibility.

As a result of some of what went on, we now witness the spectacle in the city of Toronto of the MFP inquiry. We can see the whole train of people who have been called before that inquiry and the sleazy underbelly of what happens when conflicts are not declared, when cozy little deals are being made. We have heard from Jeff Lyons about the \$150,000—although it's not clear whether it was for him or for someone else. We have heard from Tom Jacobek, who has admitted under oath that he lied, and then lied about the lies. We have heard about Dash Domi, who made a lot of money and clearly had no expertise in that type of salesman's job. We have heard, tragically, from the mayor of Toronto, Mr Mel Lastman, that he didn't know anything that was going on. He didn't know it from staff, politicians or lobbyists. He didn't even know it from Jeff Lyons, who had helped him manage and fundraise through all of his campaigns. We are about to hear in the next few weeks from Wanda Liczyk, the former treasurer of Toronto, who now works for OPG. I am sure that testimony is going to be very enlightening.

But sadly, last October, when debating the very issue that we have before us today—whether or not to have an integrity commissioner—the administration committee nixed the entire idea. They did not want an independent integrity commissioner. If any city in this province needs an integrity commissioner, I would suggest Toronto does, not because its politicians are bad but because of the overwhelming size of the city with a \$6.2-billion budget and the overwhelming size of city council, being 55 members, and the overwhelming impossibility for ordinary people to know personally their city of Toronto councillor. I represented 57,000 people at the city of Toronto during the last year and a half, and before that, I represented 115,000 people, who could not all personally know me or where a potential conflict might exist. One might find that in a small town with a reeve and a couple of councillors who all live in your village and you know them, their house and the car they drive. That is impossible in extremely large cities.

This leaves the citizenry with only one option, and that is the courts. It is not surprising that that option is hardly ever taken up. It is expensive, time-consuming, and the burden of proof is upon the accuser—the burden of proof when one has absolutely no facts by which to go. I would suggest that is why we are not seeing conflicts prosecuted.

This is a very simple resolution. I suggest that if all members agree, this is something that the province should do on behalf of the municipalities. We've seen a lot of downloading exercises; let's have an uploading exercise that actually works. Upload this responsibility to the Integrity Commissioner or to a part of his office for

municipalities. Upload it so that the citizens of this province, through their municipalities, can be assured that the politicians at the local level have the same guarantees or the same responsibilities that we in this House so gladly share with our Integrity Commissioner, so that everyone will know that we are honest and doing what needs to be done.

1040

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): It's a pleasure to join in the debate today to support Mr Christopherson's resolution. I'll just refresh the memories of the people out there as to what the resolution is. It is, "In the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should support the principle of greater accountability for politicians at the municipal level and consult with the Association of Municipalities, and municipalities, on how municipal politicians can be subject to the similar legislated requirements of public disclosure, accountability, and independent investigation with which all members of the Legislative Assembly and executive council currently comply."

I support that resolution. In my riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka, I believe I have more municipalities than probably any other riding in the province. I have 33 municipalities in the riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka. We have six moderate-sized municipalities in Muskoka, with Bracebridge, Huntsville, Lake of Bays, Muskoka Lakes, Georgian Bay township and Gravenhurst, as well as the district upper-tier government in Muskoka, and I have 26 municipalities in the Parry Sound district, as well as unorganized territories, which have local service boards that make local decisions—and from time to time there are conflicts. I know currently there are some conflicts between one of my local service boards and the fire department in the northern part of the riding.

I work on a regular basis with the mayors, the reeves, the councillors—in fact, hardly a day goes by that I'm not in contact with the various municipal politicians. In fact, this morning I just got off the phone with Ted Knight, the mayor of Parry Sound, making him aware of the various marketing programs that are available to municipalities for efforts to revitalize the community post-SARS, because Parry Sound recently was hit with some significant quarantines. About a sixth of the population, 1,000 people of the 6,000 in the town of Parry Sound, were recently in quarantine. I have certainly heard from the mayor and from businesses that they need to revitalize the community. So I was on the phone with the mayor, making him aware of the Ontario tourism marketing partnership programs available to help regenerate that community. Yesterday I was talking to Bill Core, from Perry township, to do with some local issues there. So hardly a day goes by that I'm not involved with the local politicians.

I would like to point out that those local politicians generally do a great job. They're there for the right reasons. They're motivated, because they're interested in doing the best they can for their communities. They certainly don't take on the responsibilities because of the

pay they receive, because it's, generally speaking, not a huge amount of money. But I think it is a good thing that there be more disclosure. In our case, as MPPs, we have to do an annual disclosure statement to the Integrity Commissioner of things like our assets and those of our family members—assets, bank accounts, investments—and it's available to the public as well. I think that's a good thing. It's more accountability; it keeps the whole process transparent and open. I think this sort of process, applied to municipal politicians, would not be onerous and it would be a positive step toward increasing accountability.

Mr Bradley: I am rising to speak in support of the resolution of Mr Christopherson, and I want to commend him for bringing it forward. It's very timely. Perhaps it has been timely for a number of years now, but we have just not seen the kind of legislation and framework that is necessary to ensure that the accountability and integrity at the local level is under the same scrutiny as it is here at the provincial level.

First of all, we start off by knowing that overwhelmingly our locally elected officials are honest people, people of integrity, people who have the best interests of their constituents in mind. Therefore, those individuals are not going to object to some kind of legislative framework that might emerge from this resolution.

Keep in mind that the member has not simply said that we in this House will impose upon municipalities some rules and regulations without any consultation. He has specifically said in his resolution that we are debating this morning that there shall be consultation with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, which represents municipalities in this province, and also with municipalities themselves on perhaps an individual basis.

We have to recognize that anybody who has a chance to make decisions may make decisions which are to the benefit of themselves, or decisions which are to the benefit of friends or financial contributors. If information is provided to the public on where those contributions have been made, how much they were; if there is an opportunity to investigate when there is a problem and we have somebody comparable to an integrity commissioner for the municipalities in this province, that will be a great advantage.

We have seen in the news in the past year, for instance, a number of examples of people who have been under suspicion, to say the least. These may be related to contracts that are provided to municipalities; these may be related to developments which take place within the bounds of a municipality, or a decision that simply benefits one individual or one particular business group. So, to avoid that, the member has suggested, I think wisely, that we find a mechanism to avoid that happening at the municipal level, and if it does happen to have a mechanism to deal with it appropriately in terms of investigation and penalties that can be applied.

I think this is very important for the public. The public wants to know that its elected individuals are above-board, that their interests are on the table so people can

see them, and I know there is an opportunity now for municipal politicians at a council meeting to declare conflicts of interest. Some have mentioned that that has been done from time to time to avoid making a decision on a particular subject. I don't know how often that happens, but I think it's always better to err on the side of caution in these matters.

The member has clearly said: people at the provincial level must declare assets and so on on a confidential basis to a commissioner. If a member of this Legislature wishes to draw to the attention of the Integrity Commissioner something that he or she believes is worthy of investigation, that can be done at this level. Keep in mind that, as someone said to me the other day, it is much harder to buy an entire government or buy an entire caucus within a Legislature than it is an individual who might be representing them at the local level.

We hope that doesn't happen. This resolution will go a long way to reducing the risk of that happening. It's in line with the quest we all have for open government, for accountable government, for integrity at all levels of government, and I think it commends itself to support by all members of this Legislature. I hope from it will flow legislation which will meet the goals of the resolution.

1050

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm certainly pleased to join the debate with respect to the resolution. Having been a former councillor of the city of Barrie, I can tell you that there were municipal conflict-of-interest guidelines. When you're dealing with a matter that you could have a pecuniary interest in, indirectly or directly, there is an obligation obviously to declare a conflict of interest and not vote or debate or be a part of those discussions.

What the member from Hamilton is proposing here is to bring it up to a higher standard, to the standard that we have here in the Legislature, which is a very high standard of disclosure with respect to your own personal dealings, which I know is being hotly debated right now at the federal level. They're looking to bring in greater disclosure with respect to your financial portfolio. That's one of the things we have to file every year, in terms of our financial area and also the rules we face as different members.

I think the key word here is "integrity." That's what is important out there, in terms of: how do you bring integrity to the system? Well, obviously, the members have to have integrity. The system has to be designed to make accountability the main factor, so that you can avoid the scandals which are plaguing the city of Toronto right now with respect to the MFP inquiry and the fingerprinting that is there.

Integrity, in terms of the members being transparent in terms of their financial wherewithal, certainly would be a step forward with respect to keeping the members aware of what their role is. I think it's very important, because municipal government has an incredible impact, not only with respect to the development of the community but certainly for developers and business people who can

benefit by the decisions that are made at the municipal level. The power to rezone lands with respect to official plans is an enormous power with tremendous economic benefits for those who are the beneficiaries.

So I think the level of integrity that's being demanded of this Legislature certainly shouldn't be any less for municipalities, and I think that's where the member is headed. I think that would bring that transparency.

I think the public needs to know, with respect to a member, and to have that public disclosure in terms of where they stand. If you don't have a system that's in place—and I think the way it's set up right now with the municipal conflict of interest, it's really dealing with things that are coming on the floor and that are being debated and discussed, whereas I think you may have to go a little bit further with respect to bringing the members in line with respect to other matters and to bring home what it means to be in public office.

Integrity of the member is something that has to be drilled home to the members because, quite frankly, if you don't have a system in place where they have to disclose and be a part of the process, in terms of filling out forms or dealing with what they're accountable for, who knows whether the members even know if they're subject to the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act? That would probably be part of their briefing when they're brought in as new councillors, but I think it has to go another step further, and I think that's what the member is trying to get at here: going that extra step to make sure they understand, not only from a briefing but from a written form, what their responsibility is. They have an enormous amount of power, and they also have the respect of the community and their constituents who have elected them.

So I think the member is on the right track, and I would support that fully.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I'm pleased to support this resolution.

I heard my colleague say something, and I have to ask him the question. He said he was contemplating moving to municipal politics. I thought the decision was made. Does he mean to say that he's coming back? I just need him to answer that question; it's not a very serious one. I'm just joking.

A couple of things, really quickly: in my view, if there is anybody who has to have conflict-of-interest guidelines, it's probably more so at the municipal level. In this Legislature we all understand, and I think most people will understand, that the lower the level of government, the closer you are to the people. On a daily basis, the municipalities deal with developers and with people looking to get zoning changes and all kinds of things that are a daily occurrence. If you need transparency, you certainly need to have it at the municipal level.

That's not to say there's a whole bunch of crooked politicians at the municipal level. By and large, I think that most people who serve at the municipal level are honest, hard-working people who are trying to do the right job in serving their community, and those people

aren't paid very well for what they do. Most of them do it as a part-time, temporary job, for which they get paid a stipend of maybe 1,000 bucks a month, if they're lucky, and they put far more than \$1,000 worth of wages back in that job as municipal alderman, or councillor, depending on where you live.

I think the issue is that you need to give the public a sense of transparency. You have to give them some assurances, for example, that if a particular councillor or mayor is associated with a particular development group, that will be disclosed so that it's very clear that if that issue comes before committee of the whole or comes before municipal council or in a closed session, the councillor or mayor in that case would have to remove themselves from any of the influence they may bring toward giving that particular company any kind of additional favour because they happen to be associated with them as a director or may have received some kind of gift from them or whatever.

I think that's not onerous. It's already something we do here at the provincial level. I've got to disclose, as all members of the Legislature do, if I've received any kind of gift—what's the limit? I think it's \$50 or \$100. If you get a pen that's worth \$50—I forget what the limit is; it's either \$50 or \$100, something like that. It's not a lot. But the point is, if anybody gives you, as a member of the assembly, any kind of gift—I think it's in excess of \$100—you've got to report that to the commissioner, and rightfully so. Suppose someone decided to give me a trip for \$500 or \$1,000.

Feedback from sound system.

Mr Agostino: It's a foghorn.

Mr Bisson: It's a foghorn, exactly. I've got one on my airplane in case there's fog. That really threw me off for the last couple of seconds.

Interjection: It's like The Gong Show.

Mr Bisson: I'm about to get the hook. Anyway, I just want to say that all of us here in the assembly clearly have to work under those guidelines. Why? Because we need to give the public the assurance that we're not giving any kind of favour to a particular company because we may be associated with them or had a gift. When those things happen, you have to have the commissioner of conflict of interest come in and give judgment as to whether the member has or hasn't broken the rules.

I think applying those rules at the municipal level wouldn't be seen by municipalities as a hostile act. I agree with Mr Christopherson that we shouldn't be trying to impose something without first consulting with municipalities and AMO, and that's what his resolution calls for.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): I want to commend the member for Hamilton West for bringing this resolution forward. My knowledge of the member over the past eight years and my experience with him has always indicated that he is a man who is highly principled, a man of integrity, and I don't question any motive whatever that he may have in bringing this forward, as some in this place may.

I want to say that all municipal politicians are already subject to the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act, which requires those members of municipal council to disclose any pecuniary interest in any matter before council.

However, in the 2003 budget our government indicated that the government will work with municipalities to enrich accountability for public investment and public services. The member opposite will of course be aware that in our party platform for the upcoming election campaign there is a pledge that increases to municipal taxes would have to be approved by the taxpayers in a referendum. That falls in line, essentially, with what the member for Hamilton West is trying to do as well. There are going to be municipal stakeholders who will complain, but I think you're going to have a fair amount of support among municipal stakeholders as well. I think you will have both complaints and opposition from municipal councillors and municipal mayors, but I think that what this does is set a higher standard for all municipal politicians, and of course we all know that all politics are local. Why should municipal politicians be held to any lower standard than what we in this place are?

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Christopherson: Let me thank all colleagues from all three parties for your comments. Particularly on the last point, I appreciate that it's not seen as something other than exactly what it is. I appreciate that you give me the benefit of the doubt on that. Thank you.

1100

There are a few things on which I'll just take a moment; I don't have a lot of time. The member for Scarborough-Agincourt talked about how he was supporting this and the lack of secrecy in this place. It gives me the opportunity to again point out that we have a structured opposition, with an official opposition, a loyal opposition whose role is to go after the government and hold them accountable, still loyal to our system and our Constitution. But their job is to hold people accountable. You don't have that kind of dynamic on city council, at least it's not structured. It often exists on a personal basis, but it's not a structural part of it.

My friends from Niagara Centre and Cambridge both spoke to the fact that there are occasions when people are being overly cautious. I think that speaks well to councillors who are making declarations, but it removes far too many councillors from debates they otherwise should or could be involved in, and as my friend from Beaches-East York mentioned, there are some people—I think his words were “silly” and “bizarre”—who have silly and bizarre reasons for doing things. Perhaps they just want to stay out of a controversial issue and that's a nice, neat way to do it. This makes the whole thing very straightforward.

My friend from Hamilton East and a couple of others talked about this zoning issue, and that is so crucial. A piece of land worth virtually nothing can be made to be worth millions with one vote.

Lastly, my friend from St Catharines was good enough to mention that we consider almost all municipal politicians to be members of high integrity. This is merely added protection for democracy. I thank all members and hope they will support this resolution.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. This completes the time allocated for discussing ballot item number 11. I will take the vote on this item at 12 o'clock noon.

TRUTH ABOUT IPPERWASH ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 CONCERNANT LA VÉRITÉ SUR IPPERWASH

Mr Phillips moved second reading of the following bill:

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

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

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm seeking support for my bill, which calls for a public inquiry. Just to remind the public of this event, it took place in September 1995, shortly after the new government came in. The First Nations took over Ipperwash Provincial Park after the park closed on Labour Day. The OPP had known about the plans for this for at least a month. Two days later, Dudley George was killed in a confrontation with the OPP. It's the first time a First Nations person has died in a land claim dispute in at least 100 years.

The reasons for the need for a public inquiry are twofold. There is, I think, very strong evidence of inappropriate political involvement in the police operations at Ipperwash Provincial Park at the very highest level, and I'm referring to the then Premier of the day.

The evidence of that has been gathered over eight years. Firstly, notes from meetings held on the actual day of the shooting show this: "The Premier's office wants removal now." Then you see an arrow pointing the other way: "OPP removal later." So it's this conflict between the Premier's office and the OPP. The OPP did not want removal now; the Premier's office did. The OPP are reluctant, since it appears to be a land dispute. The issue is political direction of the OPP.

That's the first piece of evidence of inappropriate involvement.

After seven years of pushing for this, the Premier finally acknowledged that the day of the shooting he held a meeting with three cabinet ministers and two senior OPP officers. As I say, for a long while he said he had no involvement in it. At that meeting, there is a note that says, "Attorney General instructed by Premier that he

desires removal within 24 hours," more evidence of what I regard as totally inappropriate involvement in this operation.

We have transcripts of the two commanding police officers after they heard this, saying, "That's not what we want. We want more time." The local member of the Legislature, a Conservative member I might add, was at the police command post at least four times before the shooting death. Four hours before the shooting, he was at the command post and said, "If police services can't do it, get someone who can. I don't mind taking the controversy."

We have here the typed notes from the police, and we had those notes probably three or four years ago. We then found the handwritten notes that provided the basis for the typed notes. We found six references to the Premier in the handwritten notes that were omitted from the typed notes.

Among things the Premier is saying in the handwritten notes: "We're on the right track." The typed note omits the Premier from those notes. In another handwritten note: "The Premier is in constant touch, good communications." The typed note says, "John Carson advised that he was keeping in contact with the Kettle Point to get their feeling." No mention of the Premier.

It's extremely unusual that somehow or other the difference between the handwritten police notes and the typed notes excluded about six political references.

On occasion, the government has said that the police in a sworn affidavit said they took no direction from the government. That is not the case. In the sworn testimony of then-Commissioner O'Grady, a well-regarded individual, I might add, in his sworn affidavit, he's very careful of this when he says that he took no "command direction" from the government and that he was never ordered to remove them by force. But he's never, in a sworn affidavit, said he did not take direction from the government.

So that's the first issue that must be determined. I say to all of us, when the Premier of the province of Ontario, and I think the evidence is strong, is inappropriately involved in a police action, it demands a public inquiry.

The second reason it demands a public inquiry is, why did the province abandon a long-standing approach to dealing with this that had existed for decades? We have evidence here that there was no policy in place at the time of the shooting death. In fact, in this note, called "Actions To Be Taken," it says, "We must establish an aboriginal policy framework by October 2, 1995." They did not have a policy. They scrapped the existing policy, put nothing in place and then they said, "We must develop one by October 2, 1995," after the shooting death. It says, "NB: the fact the government is working on an ABF"—aboriginal policy framework—"will not be part of any messaging." In other words, "Don't tell anyone we don't have a policy."

Why did the government decide to abandon that long-standing tradition? Well, the available evidence said the Premier's executive assistant said, "The Premier is

hawkish on this issue. It will set tone on how we deal with these issues over the next four years. It feels we're being tested on this issue. The Premier's office doesn't want to be seen working with Indians at all." The police, on the other hand, said, "It's imprudent to rush in."

The First Nations took over that park to protect a burial ground. At the time, we were told there was no burial ground, and then we found out that right here at Queen's Park the government had in its possession evidence of a burial ground. In fact, during construction of the park it was the government's own employee building the park who said, "Listen, we found a burial ground. This should be protected." It was the government's own document, and once it was made clear that the government had that document, it had to go to court and drop all the charges against the First Nations, because they had this defence called colour of right evidence of a burial ground.

1110

So all of us now are going to be part of the decision: do we or do we not call for a public inquiry? The government said, "We'll wait until the civil case is over before we make that decision." I'll make several points about the civil case.

The George family never wanted to launch a civil case. The only reason they did was because year after year the government refused to even commit to holding a public inquiry. They never wanted the public inquiry.

Any lawyer, outside of the government's lawyer, will tell you that the civil approach is not the right approach. Can you imagine the reaction of the people of Walkerton if we had ever said, "If you want to find out what happened at Walkerton, launch a civil case. Sue us. We're not going to hold a public inquiry." It's the same thing here.

Dudley George's brother, Sam George, is here. He has been subjected to the worst kinds of government abuse: \$3 million of taxpayer money attacking him, calling him a terrorist. It's shameful. It is truly shameful. The former Premier has spent well over \$1 million himself fighting Sam George in a battle that he should never, ever have to fight. The only reason he's doing it is because the government will not commit to holding a public inquiry.

The George family is a family of very modest means, and up against it is the entire state apparatus: \$3 million, and there will be a three-month civil case where another \$2 million will be used to attack him. It's wrong.

The evidence is overwhelming. There is a need for a public inquiry. The only reason the civil case was ever started was because the George family always suspected that Premier Harris, and now Premier Eves, would never call a public inquiry.

It is a shameful piece of Ontario's history that we have a chance to begin to erase today. I would hope the members would study the material I sent them, would agree that we need to end this sorry chapter and begin a public inquiry now.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): It's certainly a pleasure to rise on behalf of my colleagues and

the government. The member for Scarborough-Agincourt speaks about this matter in a very passionate way. But certainly this matter is before the courts. I would say, on behalf of the government, that we would not be participating in this debate.

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): I just can't believe that the government of Ontario would not participate in this debate. First the government said the public inquiry couldn't happen. They said, "It can't happen because there are criminal and civil matters underway." Then the criminal matter was finished and the government said, "We can't debate this in this House because the civil matter is underway," and the government knew that was wrong. They would have gotten advice from the Attorney General, they would have gotten advice from Cabinet Office that there is absolutely no obstacle to a public inquiry in circumstances where a civil proceeding is underway. They know that.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): Walkerton.

Mr Bryant: Walkerton happened at the same time that civil proceedings were underway. We know that. We consulted, and the Legislature consulted, with Professor Patrick Macklem at the University of Toronto faculty of law. He's an expert on this. I've read this in the House, but I'll read it again. Here's what he said, and why he said we need to have a public inquiry and why a civil proceeding is inappropriate:

"Public inquiries are often able to investigate, inform, and educate in ways superior to those available to the judicial and legislative branches of government. The judicial process, according to the Ontario Law Reform Commission, tends to assign blame by 'fragmenting issues into a limited set of categories established by existing norms,' whereas a public inquiry enables a broader examination of social causes and conditions."

He says, and this is important, "Public inquiries often perform an important social function, contributing to 'a dramatic transformation in popular perceptions of some previously poorly illuminated aspects of Canadian society and institutions.'"

That is exactly what is happening here, thanks to some extremely courageous Ontarians, one of whom is the member who just spoke, Mr Gerry Phillips. Thanks to a number of extremely courageous Ontarians, this sorry chapter in Ontario's history continues to be a black eye on the province of Ontario, and the only way to get to the truth here is to have a public inquiry.

All the defences the government has thrown up and all the money the government has spent to avoid a public inquiry just leave Ontarians more and more suspicious that something dreadful, something that violates everything we believe about the way governments ought to operate, something that violates the very principle of the separation between the crown, the government, the executive council, on one hand, and those who must perform police duties and those who must prosecute, on the other hand—something happened and somebody died, and we must get to the bottom of it.

Yet, the government comes up with excuse after excuse and spends taxpayer dollars down the drain, and

now, in the last flagrant violation of their duties, they won't even debate it in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. I can't believe it. I can't believe that they do not have the guts to stand in their place and defend their position. I can't believe that they would exercise such extraordinary arrogance and fail to stand up for the government of the day and defend its decision.

It is atrocious that the parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General will not even take the time to rise in his place and explain why on earth the government of Ontario is obstructing justice in getting to the bottom of Ipperwash—it is unbelievable—and that it would not only neglect its duties as a government, and not only neglect its duties, I say to the Attorney General, as the chief legal officer and the person there to provide some measure of independence in the midst of this debacle, but they would also violate their democratic and legislative duties to stand up and defend their position in the Legislature.

These are serious charges made by a member of the Legislature who has served in this Legislature, served in the government certainly long enough for everybody in this House to take them pretty darned seriously. He's not going to let go of this one, I can assure you. Dalton McGuinty and Ontario Liberals are not going to let go of this one, I can assure you. We must get to the bottom of it, and I cannot believe the government of Ontario will not defend itself.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I'm a little bit stunned this morning as to what this government has now decided to do. I hope they reconsider their position and actually take the time to participate in this debate. I imagine, Mr George, that this government is going to participate in this debate when it comes to the vote. They're going to stand in this Legislature en masse and vote against and kill the motion that calls for a public inquiry.

I say to the government, if you want to stand up and vote against having a public inquiry, you should at least have the decency to get up in this Legislature and tell us, the members, and the George family and the rest of the population that's watching, why you choose to do that. This is really the most despicable thing I've seen in a long time.

Mr Levac: A free vote, Gilles?

Mr Bisson: There are no free votes on that side.

Let me just go through a couple of things—I just wanted to start on that, because to me that is really beyond the pale. What is clear in this debate is that there is a mounting pile of evidence—what the government said in its first defence around “Did they have any role in the George shooting?”—starting to demonstrate that in fact there is a smoking gun, that there is something that indicates that what the government initially said when it came to its defence is really quite contrary to what the facts point to. There are all kinds of documents now that demonstrate that the government, quite frankly, was very much involved in the final decision to send the police into the park that resulted in the murder of Dudley

George. For this government to say they won't participate in debate but are prepared to vote against this motion—or are they going to abstain, which I really doubt, because if they abstain, it means to say we, the opposition, will carry the day. I have to believe that they're going to be voting in opposition to this motion. I think that's really, really despicable.

1120

There are a few things that have to be said. Mr Phillips laid out the facts as they present themselves as to the government's involvement. I want to come back and just concentrate on another issue. That issue is: one of the comments that was made by Premier Harris at the very beginning of all of this, according to the notes that we see from the conversations that happened in cabinet prior to the actual murder of Dudley George—there were a couple of comments made that, to me, are quite astounding. The one comment that really blows me away is the comment that says, “The Premier does not want to be seen as working with Indians.” I'm telling you, that is the most shocking thing that I've seen around this place. There's nothing that comes even close to it.

We're the immigrants here. We're the people that came into this country. It's not as if we came to this country and asked the native people to come here. They were here before us, and for the Premier of Ontario to take the position that he doesn't want to be seen as working with our First Nations people, to me is beyond the pale. If I look at the record of the government over the last eight years, there has been hardly an example shown anywhere that this government was prepared to do something positive toward the First Nations people of this province.

Quite aside from what happened with the Dudley George case, there are all kinds of pressing, pressing issues that have to be dealt with in First Nations communities. I represent James Bay. I represent Constance Lake. There are First Nations communities across this province, as in my riding, who are crying for help, who are saying, “We have some serious economic problems.” There is no economic activity in their communities. How do you attract a car plant, or how do you attract any kind of economic opportunity to a community like Ogoki, that is at least 200 miles north of any highway? The government of Ontario's not doing anything to address the issues in that community.

You have acute housing shortages in communities like Fort Albany, Kashechewan and others, where you've got as many as 20 or 30 people living in one house. Ask yourself a question: how does a child learn at school when you have overcrowding inside the house? We're not talking about South Africa; we're talking about Ontario, a prosperous province such as Ontario that has the means to help but refuses to, and then a Premier that says, “I don't want to be seen as working with Indians because, politically, that's not the picture I want to give to the province of Ontario.” I think it's a pretty sad reflection.

I had an opportunity here last fall when the assembled chiefs of the Mushkegowuk Tribal Council came here to

Queen's Park to assist me in trying to get a motion passed here in the Legislature that would have said a very simple thing: that whenever there is development in the mining or forestry sectors in and around First Nations communities north of 50, there be a mechanism to do taxation, as we have with any other community in the province of Ontario. The thing would have been very simple. If, for example, you build a car plant in Windsor, well, you know what? The car plant pays taxes to the municipality. Everybody accepts that as good business. If there is a mine found in Timmins, the mine pays taxes to the city of Timmins. Everybody accepts that. The companies accept it; the population accepts it; everybody thinks that's a good thing. Why? Because that's how we pay for the infrastructure of our communities. But if you develop any kind of economic activity such as mining or forestry in and about a First Nations community, there is absolutely no mechanism to give the First Nations community any kind of share of the profit from that activity that's happening on their land.

We asked a very simple thing in this Legislature. We said, "We call on the provincial government to start a process of discussion with First Nations communities, the federal government and the province about developing a mechanism to share in the profits of those particular corporations that are doing business in and about First Nations communities so they can share in the wealth, as all other communities in the province can."

This government en masse, in front of the assembled chiefs of the Mushkegowuk Tribal Council and their Grand Chief Toby Beck, stood in opposition to that motion. Quite frankly, I was shocked, because early on I was getting indications from the government, from discussions I had with them for a couple of weeks before the motion, that they were actually in favour of starting that discussion. I thought, "Finally, we're going to get some progress under the Tory administration." Instead, they stood up—the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, the AG responsible for native issues in the province of Ontario, the Minister of Energy, the MNR minister—all ministers that deal with First Nations communities and the entire government got up and voted in opposition.

Why I raise that is I think it's pretty indicative of the comments that were made by Premier Harris in the summer of 1995 which was, according to the documents, that he doesn't want to be seen as working with those Indians. I say to him, first of all, that's a pretty racist thing to say. Number two, it looks like that was the policy of the government for the last eight years.

There are First Nations communities around this province who are in desperate need of assistance from this government, because clearly the federal government is not responding to the degree it needs to in those communities. The province could play a role, as we do with municipalities. We have no problem in this province supporting municipalities in Ontario, but we hide behind the fact that native communities are basically governed by the Indian Act, and because they are, we say, "Oh, we

can't give money for housing. We can't give money for water and sewers. We can't give money for any basic infrastructure because, oh, they're a ward of the federal government. They're responsible under the Indian Act." All native leaders, people in native communities and non-natives alike are saying to this government that we have to stop hiding behind the Indian Act. We have to stop hiding behind the whole federal government issue because, at the end of the day, if we don't take our responsibility here as a province, our communities and places like the James Bay and others are going to have a heck of a hard time trying to deal with issues that are very pressing.

I know other members of my caucus are going to want to speak to this, so I say in closing that we will be voting proudly in support of the motion that was put forward by Mr Phillips. We do that knowing that the government is not going to be voting in support of it. But we think it's important that at least some of the members of this assembly stand up in support of First Nations communities and in support of what's happened to the George family and their wanting to be able to bring an end to this and to have a public inquiry.

The fact that the government refuses to get up and even debate this issue, to me, is beyond the pale. For the member to get up at the beginning of the debate and say, "Because this is before the courts, we're not going to comment to the Legislature," there's a real hollow ring to that because (a) we're protected in this Legislature from anything we say being used in court—the reality is, you can't sue me for what I say in here, so what are you afraid of?—and (b) I think it shows an affront to the First Nations people of this province that this government is going to remain silent on what is one of the most crucial issues to the First Nations communities over the last eight years: the murder of Dudley George. I just can't believe that this government is refusing to speak to this particular motion.

This is your opportunity to be heard on it. We're calling on this government to participate in this debate, to vote in favour of this motion and once and for all to give some closure, but, more importantly, to make sure that we develop policies in this province that don't allow this incident to be repeated ever again. The only way we can do that is by a public inquiry.

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): Bill 46, the Truth About Ipperwash Act, is before us. This bill was presented by my colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt. Let me say from the start that I have the greatest respect for this member. His integrity is unquestionable. His vigilance is known internationally. He's determined to get to the truth of this matter—not only he alone, but Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal Party are very much focused on getting to the truth of this matter.

Essentially what this bill is doing is addressing a very sad and critical period in our history—whether the Conservative Party wants to recognize it or not. The Ipperwash affair touches many aspects, but there remain many serious, difficult and fundamental questions to be answered in this issue. The killing of Dudley George, an

unarmed Canadian engaging in an inherent right to protest, was not only devastating to his family—his brother is here today—but also demands answers and justice, and is injurious to the aboriginal community at large.

1130

This matter, this issue, has been before the House many times. This incident, as you know, happened in 1995. In fact, this affair has been presented before our native community, the people of Ontario, Canada and the international community at large. This bill calls for an open public inquiry. It does so because there is something rather suspect going on here. We have learned over the past couple of years of political interference prior to the killing of Dudley George. The information, as presented by my colleague, is very, very telling. He has made this available to all members of the House and I hope they have read it; I'm sure they have read it. It establishes a direct link between what happened on that day, the actions of the Ontario Provincial Police and the role of the Mike Harris government.

Basically, what I see is the politicization of the situation. We have a Premier, according to the leaked information, meeting with officers and ordering them what to do. Yet we have officers wanting to do something different. As a matter of fact, the OPP would very much ask for separation of the OPP from the government to let the OPP get on with their work—but somehow we see a lot of interference here—and that's the only way we can have some independence in all of this. At least, that's what the evidence is saying. The consequence of this is the innocent killing of Dudley George.

Another important element in all this is it calls into question the many issues of native rights, something we have ignored and need to address. Therefore, the killing of Dudley George, the situation at Ipperwash and the disrespect of native rights surely imposes on all of us to finally bring truth to justice and justice to aboriginal people. It is time to find the truth about the killing of Dudley George. I personally fully—and Dalton McGuinty and all of us here—support the calling of a public inquiry.

I was appalled to notice that the member from London-Fanshawe, who represents the government here, a former police officer, refused to even speak on this most important issue. I have been here 18 years, and I can't recall at any time a private member's bill where the government refused to address an issue. This tells me there is something funny going on here.

Our human rights issues in this province are really appalling, and this one tells us exactly where this government is at. Even this policy today, as they go into another election, tells us how they target immigrants and other people. It's a "them and us" kind of a government. It is an extremely sad day in this province, and I fully support my member from Scarborough-Agincourt in putting this bill forward.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I rise in this House chagrined, embarrassed, ashamed of this

Legislature. We stand here with responsibilities and we stand here on this particular issue with special responsibilities. I address my remarks not to the members opposite, who have abdicated their responsibilities, but rather to the parliament of public opinion, because I ask every member of the public watching here to do something about this issue. This is a failure—a failure, as the members nailed to their seats opposite symbolically, without intending, tell us exactly what's at work here.

This is a question of no less than, what kind of province do we live in, in Ontario today, in 2003, eight years after a man has died in the prosecution of democratic rights, for the first time in the history of Ontario, a native Canadian killed in an interaction with our police forces? Yet the Premier's office is involved in this. The Premier's office is implicated. The stunning thing is, as we stand here in this House eight years later, with government backbenchers stuck to their seats, it's clearly possible that the Premier's office in Ontario in 2003 can arrange to elude accountability, even when a man dies. That is stunning. It is a failure of our institutions. You would think the fact that there is evidence—and there is clear evidence, notations in the police logbooks that talk about the involvement of the Premier's office, the highest office this level of government has to offer, save the symbolism of the Lieutenant Governor.

Yet there is no sense of obligation on the part of the officeholders or the people who prop up that office, the members opposite, to see the rudiments of accountability brought to bear—there is no conclusion you can draw after eight years of delay, denial and running away from the light—that the government and the Premiers have something to hide. It reflects so poorly on this House that our other mechanisms—the Attorney General, who is meant to be independent to a degree to advise the cabinet, has failed in his responsibilities, as have successive attorneys general in this particular job.

This House is meant to be the place to air the grievances, especially such serious grievances as this one: political interference with police action. There can't be too many more important things that the people who will go home from this place tonight want to be able to depend on, that we live in a society where that can't happen. Well, there is evidence—and each of the members of this House has seen it—evidence that there has been political interference. Yet it's still possible to have a lack of responsibility taken that would make this continue. There's a document to prove that this was a just occupation, that this is in fact an Indian burial ground. There are judge's comments that say the idea that shots were fired on the part of native protesters was a fiction created after the fact. There is a man, Dudley George, who died innocently—not an innocent man in the sense of a perfect man, but a man who deserves from this place nothing less than the respect and dignity that's not been accorded to him here right now.

We will all remain guilty of compounded injustice. There is no greater indictment, for a place that sends people here on behalf of others, to not be able to muster up justice. We stand here blocking and interfering until

we vote for this resolution on behalf of the dignity and the respect that after eight years Dudley George, Sam George and everyone here deserves.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I had not really thought I was going to speak to this issue today, but I feel compelled that I must.

The George family is here today, seeking what any Canadian citizen or resident of Ontario would consider their right. They are seeking justice, seeking the truth, and hoping that their elected representatives take what they are saying seriously, and do something with it.

The truth cannot ever be suppressed. It can be held back and delayed, but it can never in the end be suppressed. About 100 years ago, in France, there was a gentleman who was wrongly convicted and sent off to the penal colonies of Devil's Island in South America. His name was Mr Dreyfus and his crime, I suppose, was being Jewish. Because they needed a scapegoat, they sent him off. People in France started to rally against that, to see how inherently wrong it was.

1140

It took a great author, a great man, to stand up: Émile Zola. Probably the most famous thing he ever wrote was two words: "J'accuse," "I accuse." He wrote it and he wrote it again and again and again. It was only after Émile Zola personally had to take flight that the people of France started to look and say, "What was wrong? What has gone on here? Did Mr Zola have something to say? Did something need to be looked at?" As you know, Mr Speaker, it took several years after that, but an inquiry was held in that country and Mr Dreyfus was returned from Devil's Island and was subsequently cleared of all wrongdoing. But it took someone to say, "J'accuse."

I don't know whether it's appropriate to say that here in this Legislature, because I personally do not know all the facts as Mr Zola understood them in the case of Mr Dreyfus. But I will tell you that in the last 20 months that I have been in this Legislature, I have witnessed an awful lot of obfuscation and an awful lot of a government that is trying to hide something. I have seen a Premier try to take Canada's national newspaper to court. I have seen that every time Mr Phillips gets up or other members get up to ask questions, there are no answers forthcoming. I have seen a family on many occasions coming here to ask for something simple and decent, and I have seen nothing happen.

Today I see more of the same. I see the government members opposite sitting in their seats and refusing to say something. Well, I'm going to ask the members opposite who are refusing to say something to go the next step further. If you're not going to say anything and if you're not going to participate in this, I'm going to ask you to at least do the honourable thing: when the vote is called, don't vote. I'm going to ask you not to bring in legions of Tories to vote against something for which you will not speak. I am going to ask that you simply sit in your seat and not stand when it is time to have your name registered. I am asking that you do the right and

honourable thing: if you are not going to participate in something the electors have sent you here to do, that you not participate fully, that you let this motion pass even if you are not party to it and that you let the process unwind.

It is extremely unfortunate for the George family what they are going to have to do and the events which are going to unfold in the courts in September. They do not want that. They want this chamber to come to the resolution. They want to know that Dudley George did not die in vain. They want something to happen for all of the people of this province, and particularly for all of the native people who have an unqualified right, in my view, to their lands, an unqualified right to protect their culture, an unqualified right to respect those who have died in Indian burial places. That is what we need to secure in this Legislature. That's what needs to be said. If the members opposite do not wish to participate in such a debate, then I ask them to simply sit in their seats when the vote is called.

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

The mover of the motion has two minutes to respond.

Mr Phillips: In the strongest terms possible, I'm pleading with the House to agree to this bill.

Let me remind all of us about what happened here. The First Nations had evidence of a burial ground that was not being protected. They moved to protect it. An unarmed man was shot and killed; there was a judge who concluded that. He said that this was an unarmed man who was killed.

I am making the charge that there is overwhelming evidence that there was inappropriate political involvement at the highest level, the Premier's office, around the events at Ipperwash Provincial Park. I'm making that charge on the basis of eight years of gathering evidence.

The people of Ontario have a right to find out the truth about what happened at Ipperwash. The George family has a right to know. In my opinion, the government members are being part of a plan to cover this up. I do not understand how the government members would not take the time to look at the evidence and conclude that we need a public inquiry. This is extremely serious when the Premier's office can be involved in something like this and then the Premier's office can control whether or not the truth ultimately comes out. It's an extremely serious charge I'm making based on the evidence that I have.

I would urge the government members to think for themselves and to support this bill that will make sure we get at the truth about what happened at Ipperwash.

The Deputy Speaker: The time for private members' business has expired.

Pursuant to standing order 96(e), the proceedings of this House now stand suspended until 12 o'clock high noon.

The House recessed from 1146 to 1201.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): We will deal first with ballot item number 11. Mr Christopherson has moved private member's notice of motion number 9. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

TRUTH ABOUT IPPERWASH ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 CONCERNANT
LA VÉRITÉ SUR IPPERWASH

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): We will now deal with ballot item number 12. Mr Phillips has moved second reading of Bill 46. 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 nays have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1202 to 1207.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour will please rise and remain standing until named by the Clerk.

Ayes

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

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please rise and remain standing until named by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John
Baird, John R.	Johns, Helen	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Kells, Morley	Sampson, Rob
Clark, Brad	Klees, Frank	Sterling, Norman W.
Coburn, Brian	Martiniuk, Gerry	Stewart, R. Gary
DeFaria, Carl	Maves, Bart	Tasca, Joseph N.
Dunlop, Garfield	Mazzilli, Frank	Tsubouchi, David H.
Ecker, Janet	McDonald, AL	Turnbull, David
Elliott, Brenda	Miller, Norm	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Flaherty, Jim	Molinari, Tina R.	Wilson, Jim
Galt, Doug	Munro, Julia	Young, David
Gilchrist, Steve	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wood, Bob
Gill, Raminder	Newman, Dan	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 34; the nays are 38.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

All matters relating to private members'—

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: There is nothing out of order.

Mr Ramsay: Yes, there is something out of order. The member from Don Valley West insulted my colleague.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, order. I did not hear anything; the table did not hear anything. But if any member has something they would like to withdraw, I would give them an opportunity to do it right now.

Hon David Turnbull (Associate Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation): Mr Speaker, I find it regrettable that I used the most logical term, "hypocrite," and I withdraw it.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: All matters relating to private members' business having been completed, I do now leave the chair and the House will resume at 1:30 this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1212 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CANADIAN ENVIRONMENT AWARDS

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I was pleased to be able to attend the annual Canadian Environment Awards presentation on Monday, June 2, where activist, author, analyst, educator, researcher and consultant Gary Gallon received the citation of lifetime achievement for his dedication to the environment during his career. This honour recognizes exceptional dedication and outstanding long-term contributions to the Canadian environment. Mr Gallon is well known in that field. Along with the winner in the category of climate change, Bob Hunter, Gary founded Greenpeace Canada many years ago in British Columbia.

The group Cows and Fish won in the environmental learning category; Moira Brown of Bolton, Ontario, for restoration and rehabilitation; Herb Hammond of BC, for sustainable living; Tom Maccagno of Alberta, for conservation; and Lynda Lukasik of Hamilton, for environmental health.

Interestingly, one of the finalists was Save the Rouge Valley System, which has been very active in restoring fish and wildlife habitat along the Rouge River. They had received a grant from the Trillium Foundation in recognition of this work. Unfortunately, this grant has been pulled by the Trillium Foundation—I don't know whether the government has influenced that or not—supposedly because this organization, Save the Rouge Valley System, is being political. I think this is a wrong decision on the part of the government. That funding should be restored.

I think all these individuals and groups should be congratulated for their work on the environment.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACT

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Each passing day gives us yet more examples of how this government pours public money into private pockets. Using information obtained under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, New Democrats have discovered that the anti-union, anti-worker firm Cintas has quietly doubled the amount they charge the government to clean Brad Clark's hand towels in the Ministry of Labour. Since the contract with Cintas began just over three years ago, the price of these clean towels has increased by over 100%.

The contract with Cintas allows them to jack up the prices any time they want. They seem to be willing to take advantage of the taxpayers of this province by exercising this right whenever they please. Another interesting feature of the Cintas contract is a charge they tack on to the bill known as an "environmental charge" or a "delivery/environmental/energy charge" or sometimes just a "service charge."

This company, mind you, was the defendant in a class action lawsuit in the United States over the existence of these phony, scam charges. Last year, they agreed to settle a lawsuit for US\$14 million. Clearly, there is something wrong here.

Why is the government doing business with this company? How many other ministries and government agencies are being taken to the cleaners by Cintas?

I hope the government will truly come clean with the public and taxpayers' dollars, cancel this contract and come clean about any other dealings they have with these gougers.

MAGGIE MALONEY

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): For most 10-year-olds, success may be measured by the number of assignments finding their way to the fridge door in a show of support from Mom and Dad.

Maggie Maloney is a 10-year-old who attends St Thomas Aquinas Elementary school in Keswick. She was thrilled when her essay on heroes was the winning entry in the York Regional Police Chief for a Day contest. She was chief for a day on April 17. Maggie was picked up at her front door by a police cruiser and whisked off to police headquarters in Newmarket. Clad in her tailor-made uniform, she made her way to Chief Armand LaBarge's top-floor office. With one hand on the Bible, Maggie was officially sworn in and saluted by Chief LaBarge. Then it was off to the forensic identification unit for her police identification card.

It was an exciting day and a great experience for Maggie. But Maggie was back on the job on Sunday, May 25, with Chief LaBarge recognizing the first annual Show Me the Way Home campaign in Newmarket. This event was to heighten awareness for children and their families about keeping children safe in our communities.

Now, Maggie hasn't made up her mind yet about her future career. But law enforcement is definitely near the top of the list. Congratulations to Maggie Maloney, who recognized police officers as heroes every day of the week.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): To say that the forest products industry in northern Ontario is going through a crisis seems more and more like a massive understatement. Layoffs at area sawmills are now well over the 1,000-person mark, and almost every day more are being announced. While the US softwood lumber duties and the rising Canadian dollar are two of the key factors in this growing economic disaster, and while some form of substantial mitigation is needed by the federal government, I firmly believe that the provincial government needs to play a far more active role in dealing with this huge blow to our northern economy. Both Natural Resources Minister Ouellette and Northern Development Minister Wilson need to understand that right now, forestry product companies and municipal leaders all across the north are dealing with real concerns about a reduction in wood supply and an increase in fibre costs that can only add to the pressures facing the industry. What is needed now is stability, and the province must at least commit to suspending any government action that could further destabilize supply. Great concern has been expressed about the Room to Grow process and what impact it may have, not only on our present situation, but on hoped-for expansions.

Ministers, we need public assurances that the province will step up to the plate and support our northern industry and its thousands of workers. We cannot stand by and watch this happen, and place the blame elsewhere, when the province clearly has a significant role to play in averting this crisis. You must give our municipal leaders a place at the table, as they will tell you that you must take specific action to help us through this dire situation. Sitting back and watching this unfold is unacceptable, particularly when so much is at stake.

INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S FESTIVAL OF MISSISSAUGA

Mr Rob Sampson (Mississauga Centre): It's my pleasure to stand here today with some of my colleagues from Mississauga to inform the House that the eighth annual International Children's Festival of Mississauga is taking place this week until late in the evening—well, not too late, anyhow—of Saturday, June 7.

The Children's Festival brings exceptional artists from around the world to share their gifts with children of all ages, with an emphasis on preschool to grade 8 boys and girls. Last year, more than 15,000 young boys and girls attended this event. The theme for this year is "From Outer Space to Inner Peace," which captures the

festival's emphasis on stimulating the imagination and fostering the creativity that we all know lies in the hearts and minds of our young children.

I encourage everyone with children to experience this unique festival in Mississauga's beautiful Living Arts Centre and the surrounding streets of that area. The Mississauga downtown square offers amazing arts and science adventures, with activities both inside and outside. The many free attractions include hiphop and aerial dancing, interactive singing, storytelling and acrobatics. There's going to be a steel band there, an art-making tent, a technology workshop and a marketplace.

On behalf of all Mississaugans, I'd like to thank the hard-working festival board, the volunteers and the many others who make this outstanding event possible. I encourage all members here, and those watching, to come and work and play with our children.

1340

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): The Harris-Eves government is starting to bear a startling resemblance to an earlier government. The Harris-Eves government lurched into the fifth year of its mandate this week. Who can forget the last government that went into its fifth year: the Bob Rae NDP government, which clung to power in that fifth year? A lot of comparisons.

The Harris-Eves government has increased the province's debt by \$21 billion; that's second only to the Rae NDP government increasing the debt by almost \$60 billion. Ernie Eves broke his own Taxpayer Protection Act; the NDP raised taxes more than any other government in provincial history. Ernie Eves had the Magna budget, betraying centuries of parliamentary tradition; the NDP had the social contract, betraying decades of their solidarity with the union movement. Ernie Eves promised a 20% tax cut; he broke that promise. The NDP promised no Sunday shopping; they broke that promise. Ernie Eves promised that selling the 407 wouldn't lead to skyrocketing tolls; he broke that promise. The NDP promised public auto insurance to bring down rates; they broke that promise—even though, I guess, they're promising that again now. Ernie Eves had a scandal-plagued government with ministerial resignations; the NDP had a scandal-plagued government with ministerial resignations. Experts say Ernie Eves is running a \$2-billion deficit this year, and that it may run higher than that; the NDP ran massive deficits too.

As the Harris-Eves government lurches into its fifth year, they're looking more and more like Bob Rae and the NDP every day.

APHASIA AWARENESS MONTH

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I would like to stand in the House today and acknowledge that June is International Aphasia Awareness Month. Like most people, you've never heard of the word "aphasia," but

aphasia is a part of the diagnosis for approximately one third of all stroke survivors. Aphasia is a communications disorder where people have difficulty talking and understanding what is said. It is estimated that in Canada there are over 100,000 aphasics.

The goal of this international observation and event is to raise awareness of aphasia and the resources that are available to aphasics. Public awareness is a critical first step in easing re-entry back into the community for people who are afflicted.

In Ontario, we are fortunate that we have five aphasia centres. I'm very fortunate to have been involved over the last 19 years with the Burlington Aphasia Centre, now known as the Halton Aphasia Centre. Adult aphasics can visit the centre, along with their families, and receive various activities for rehabilitation and support and fellowship.

People are surprised to learn that just under 50% of all those people affected are under the age of 65. I encourage people to get involved and call the president, Bruce Howard, at 905-681-8805, and volunteer for a very great program in our community of Burlington.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): Like a creaking, tottering truck carrying too much baggage and running out of gas, the Tory government dragged itself into its fifth year this week.

It's been five long, dark, terrible years of cronyism, mismanagement and helping themselves and their friends instead of helping the people of Ontario; five years of pulling money out of public schools to fund private schools; five years of bad air; five years of polluted water; five years of lost opportunities in our colleges and universities; five years of failing to achieve our economic potential; five years of second-class treatment of our foreign-trained professionals; five years of talking tough on crime while yanking \$181 million out of actually fighting crime; five years of slinking, slithering, slipping toward the two-tier health care this government longs to embrace; five years of robbing our seniors of their dignity with substandard home care and nursing homes; five years of skyrocketing auto insurance rates; five years of shortages of doctors and nurses; five years of stifling the voice of the people with no public hearings; five years of self-serving, partisan advertising wasting taxpayer money; five years of failing to collect corporate taxes; five years of waste on government consultants; five years of a government out of ideas, out of energy and out for itself and its friends.

It's been five long, dark, terrible years. Now it's time for a change in Ontario.

HUNTSVILLE FIRE SAFETY AWARDS

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): Today I rise to recognize this year's recipients of the fire safety awards in the town of Huntsville, part of the great riding

of Parry Sound-Muskoka. These awards are given by the fire marshal to recognize outstanding contributions to fire protection and prevention in Ontario.

Robert Bulloch is the owner of McDonald's restaurants in Huntsville and Parry Sound. He has been a long-time supporter of fundraising initiatives for local fire departments. Mr Bulloch's latest venture has resulted in raising \$67,000 for Risk Watch, an injury prevention program for children. As a result of his donated time and energy, every primary school in the Huntsville-Lake of Bays area has been supplied with Risk Watch curriculum and resource kits. I congratulate Mr Bulloch and his staff on receiving the fire safety advocate award.

I'd also like to congratulate Ian Byers and his staff at MORE FM 105.5 in Huntsville on receiving this year's fire safety partner award. MORE FM provided on-air support for the fundraising efforts of the Muskoka Injury Prevention Coalition. Through the generous support of MORE FM and other community partners, the coalition raised thousands of dollars for the Risk Watch injury prevention program for children. Over the years, MORE FM has been a strong supporter of the fire department and is always willing to bring lifesaving messages to the community.

The support these people have provided in their community is a major step to guaranteeing a safer environment for local residents. Their hard work and generosity is truly appreciated.

VISITORS

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm sure you'll all join me in greeting the parents of Caitlyn Hanley, one of our pages from Brantford: mom, Charmaine, and Dad, Jeff; and brother, Josh, and sister, Meghan. Both her brother and sister claim they can do a better job than Caitlyn. I look forward to that. We welcome them to the House today.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): We welcome our friends who have joined us. It's not a point of order, just like it would be out of order if I were to say that beside them is the Deputy Clerk's family, visiting from Alberta, but I'm sure we wish them well.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

VETERANS APPRECIATION DAY ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003

SUR LE JOUR DE LA RECONNAISSANCE DES ANCIENS COMBATTANTS

Mr Bartolucci moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 86, An Act to proclaim Veterans Appreciation Day / Projet de loi 86, Loi proclamant le Jour de la reconnaissance des anciens combattants.

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

The member for a short statement?

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Every June 6, Canadians commemorate the anniversary of the allied invasion of Normandy in 1944, commonly known as D-Day. On this day, 340 Canadians gave their lives and another 574 were wounded. It is appropriate to recognize and pay tribute to Ontario's courageous veterans who fought in World War II and in other conflicts, and who now make a very positive contribution in every community of this province.

This bill would proclaim the first Saturday in June of each year as Veterans Appreciation Day.

PUBLIC SECTOR

ENERGY EFFICIENCY ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR L'EFFICACITÉ ÉNERGÉTIQUE DU SECTEUR PUBLIC

Mr Cordiano moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 87, An Act to require that public sector organizations conduct an energy audit, submit an energy efficiency plan and implement the plan / Projet de loi 87, Loi exigeant que les organismes du secteur public fassent une analyse énergétique et soumettent et mettent en oeuvre un plan d'efficacité énergétique.

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

The member for a short statement?

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): This bill requires that all public sector organizations prepare and submit energy efficiency plans to the Minister of Energy after the completion of an energy audit. After the minister approves the energy efficiency plan, the public sector organization is required to implement it.

I believe the time has come for conservation to start to take hold, not only in the public sector, directly influenced or run by the government, but in the broader public sector. We can ill afford in this province to continue to waste energy in the way we do, and I think this bill will see to it that the broader public sector in fact begins a conservation plan that is badly needed in this province, given the energy crisis we're facing.

1350

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The Minister of the Environment.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Welcome back.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Thank you. I could say that to you every day because I think you visit planets we've never been to.

I want to remind everyone that today, June 5, is World Environment Day. It's a time to encourage people everywhere to do their part to protect their air, water and land.

The Ontario government is a leader in environmental protection. We recognize that a well-protected environment is absolutely fundamental to the high quality of life we enjoy in this great province. Our government has taken unprecedented action to protect Ontario's environment. I want to take a few moments to outline some of those actions.

Consider our clean water strategy, which includes the most comprehensive protection in the province's history. This government has spared no effort to ensure that Ontario has and enforces the toughest drinking water standards in the world. In August 2000 we introduced Operation Clean Water. It included the drinking water protection regulation, which gave Ontario its first ever legally enforceable standards for drinking water quality. This regulation also includes strict requirements for testing, treatment and reporting.

To ensure compliance with this regulation, we implemented annual inspections of all municipal water facilities in the province. We have also hired and trained 51 new water treatment plant inspectors and 10 supervisors to do this work.

The release of Commissioner Dennis O'Connor's report of the Walkerton inquiry was an important milestone in this government's efforts to offer clean, safe drinking water to everyone in Ontario. Commissioner O'Connor's report amounts to a new vision of water protection for Ontario. The Ontario government is committed to implementing all 121 of his recommendations.

One of the key O'Connor recommendations is the creation of a Safe Drinking Water Act, which was passed in this House in December 2002. Among other things, this act makes Ontario the first province with the authority to require mandatory licensing and accreditation of laboratories that perform drinking water testing; requires the certification of all drinking water system operators, including those operators that have been grandparented under the old certification regime; and requires an owner's licence for municipal drinking water systems. We've also created the new position of chief drinking water inspector, fulfilling another O'Connor recommendation.

Another important piece of legislation passed by this House is the Sustainable Water and Sewage Systems Act. It will ensure that effective water and sewage services are protecting the health of Ontarians, not just today but for generations to come.

As I said earlier, our comprehensive approach to water is one that protects this important resource from source to tap. And in that regard, source protection is integral to our clean water strategy.

We recently released for consultation the final report of the Advisory Committee on Watershed-Based Source-

Protection Planning. The committee has provided us with excellent recommendations on ways to protect the sources of our drinking water. Like the members of this committee, our government recognizes the importance of source protection. We are committed to introducing legislation on source protection planning later this year.

On the same day our government released the committee report, we announced important actions regarding permits to take water, including a six-month moratorium on new permits to take water for the Oak Ridges moraine and the Niagara Escarpment. This moratorium protects two of southern Ontario's most environmentally sensitive areas. It also builds on the excellent work of my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs with respect to the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001.

Our focus on water is understandable, but we're also working hard to reduce air pollution and provide the public with information about the air they breathe. Our government continues to be a leader in comprehensive air quality initiatives.

Most recently, we opened a new air monitoring station in Belleville. This brings the number of monitoring stations in Ontario to 37, an increase of seven since 1995. We've increased from six to seven the number of times the provincial air quality index is reported daily. The AQI serves to ensure that vital information is easily available to all citizens. And we are the first province in Canada to include fine particulate matter in our air quality index.

OnAir, the on-line emissions reporting registry, is another way of ensuring public access to information. OnAir provides emissions reports by facilities in the electricity, industrial, commercial, institutional and municipal sectors. The information we gain will help us develop our actions to improve air quality, including our proposed clean air plan to reduce industrial air emissions.

We already have in place stringent caps for the electricity sector. When the caps, which are being progressively phased in, are fully implemented in 2007, they will reduce the limits for smog- and acid-rain-causing emissions by 53% for nitrogen oxides and 25% for sulphur dioxide. This is the equivalent of removing more than one million cars from Ontario roadways.

As well, we've passed a regulation requiring Lakeview generating station to stop burning coal by April 30, 2005, something neither the official opposition nor the third party did when they were in office. Our throne speech also highlighted our commitment to phase out all coal-fired generating stations no later than 2015, a reasonable and reachable goal that will not put the taxpayers at risk.

This government created the Drive Clean program. Significant emissions reductions are being made through Drive Clean, which now covers all municipalities in the "smog zone" from Windsor to the Quebec border. Beginning next year, heavy-duty diesel trucks and buses on Ontario roadways must meet the strictest emissions standards in North America.

We've also strengthened Ontario's Smog Patrol, which targets the most grossly polluting vehicles on Ontario roadways. The Smog Patrol is just one of many ways we're maintaining and enforcing Ontario's environmental laws.

Another is the environmental SWAT team, which is getting tough on polluters in sectors that traditionally have compliance problems or have the potential to significantly affect public health.

Backing our various enforcement measures is a penalty regime that includes the highest fines and longest jail terms in Canada for major environmental offences.

This government is taking decisive action to protect Ontario's environment. In the spirit of the occasion, I encourage all my colleagues to take this opportunity to redouble their efforts to communicate to their constituents what they can do to protect and enhance the environment.

The Speaker: Responses?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I'm going to do some communicating. I'm going to communicate with the Minister of the Environment and his government on what it could do and what it is not doing to save the environment in this province.

First of all, we have to recognize that everything this government has done in the field of the environment it has done never in its wildest dreams planning to do so, and to this very day doesn't want to do it. So let's recognize that, that anything that has been done has been because of public pressure because of the kind of media attention that prompts this government to take some action.

Smog is estimated by the Ontario Medical Association to kill over 2,000 people per year prematurely in this province, and yet we see inadequate action being taken on smog issues. Day after day, almost, there are press conferences held in this building by environment and public interest groups describing where this government is falling down on its job and making wise recommendations that the government never seems to follow.

As finance minister, remember, Ernie Eves cut one third of the staff of the Ministry of the Environment and one half of the operating budget of the Ministry of the Environment, placing it in a very vulnerable position and not allowing it to do the job it is supposed to do.

We all remember the Walkerton tragedy, which killed seven people and made over 2,000 people very, very ill. The Walkerton inquiry found that the Harris-Eves government's reckless cuts contributed to this tragedy.

We find out from NAFTA, the NAFTA environmental division, that Ontario is now the third-worst polluting jurisdiction in all of North America.

We know that gridlock costs the GTA some \$2 billion a year in productivity, and yet we see a government that has dragged its feet until it's been forced into taking action on transportation issues, particularly as they relate to public transportation. Even today, municipalities receive far less than they used to from the provincial government in terms of support for public transportation.

Things have gotten much worse under the Harris-Eves government. In 2002, there were 27 smog days in Ontario, breaking 2001's record, which was the worst in history. When the Harris-Eves government first took office in 1995, there were 11 smog days.

The Ontario Medical Association, in addition to telling us how many people die prematurely, said 13,000 additional emergency room visits and \$1.1 billion in health care costs are incurred as a result of smog.

We have to remember as well that since 1995, Ontario has seen the largest increase in pollution in all of North America. Ontario now imports four times as much hazardous waste from the US as it did when the Harris-Eves government took office in 1995. The Sierra Legal Defence Fund documented more than 10,000 violations of Ontario's water pollution laws between 1995 and 1999. The Harris-Eves government laid only 11 charges.

1400

At present, the Ontario government spends only \$5 million per year to assist municipalities in improving waste diversion, funds allocated from the LCBO.

As finance minister, Ernie Eves cancelled all provincial support—\$35 million per year—for waste diversion and blue box recycling in 1995. In other words, we have a record which is not to be bragged about, but a record of which this government should be ashamed.

We recognize that they've done nothing about source protection of water. In fact, I recall that there were over 700 monitoring stations on streams and rivers in this province. That was reduced drastically to somewhere around 200. So about 500 monitoring stations were removed at the very time we recognized that there were problems in the environment.

The select committee on alternative fuels had dozens upon dozens of excellent recommendations, but virtually none of them have been implemented. This is collecting dust that I have to wipe off this particular report.

The Walkerton report: only half of the recommendations have been implemented so far. I know that the Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation must be very concerned, because he announced the Walkerton inquiry.

I want to say as well that unfortunately this government joined Ralph Klein in fighting against improvement of the situation that would have been dealt with by the Kyoto accord: global warming. This government decided it would align itself with Ralph Klein and the anti-environment group.

Tay River in eastern Ontario: this government overturned a decision and allowed a company to take millions upon millions of gallons of water from the Tay River.

There's nothing being done about energy conservation. They've pulled the grant from the Save the Rouge group, and nutrient management legislation has not been fully implemented.

It's a dismal record, of which the minister should be ashamed.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): It seems as though the minister's head is still in the clouds, up in

the Eiffel Tower, from when he was in France, when people back here in Ontario were breathing in smog and prematurely dying from the pollution belching out of his coal plants. Where was he, on taxpayers' money, while hydro rates had gone soaring because of this government's deregulation? He was over strolling around in France and up in the Eiffel Tower, as hard-working people here in Ontario—

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): Don't forget Rome.

Ms Churley: I mustn't forget Rome.

Mr Agostino: And London.

Ms Churley: That's right—and London. He was strolling around in these countries, partly at taxpayers' expense, while people over here were suffering from those high, spiralling, out-of-control hydro rates and breathing in increasingly polluted air from those dirty, polluting coal plants.

The minister has the nerve to stand up here today and say that they are acting on the recommendations from the Walkerton inquiry. Very recently the government admitted that they've only completed 16 of 121 recommendations from these reports. Despite the recommendations from this inquiry and despite Justice O'Connor saying that this government bore some responsibility for what happened in Walkerton, we've recently heard the minister and the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound once again say, "No, it's not our fault. We had nothing to do with it. It was just the Koebel brothers."

Here we have a minister standing up today and bragging about having completed 16 of 121 recommendations. Still, to this day, the government clearly has not learned its lesson that public water testing labs and public investments are key components of the Safe Drinking Water Act.

Another thing I want to point out again is that the Toronto Star recently revealed that there were 533 bad water reports from drinking water systems throughout the province last year. The environment ministry reports that 40% of water systems in Ontario are out of compliance. This is after Walkerton, and still, three years later, we have those 40% of water systems out of compliance. While the minister was running around in France, Rome and London, here we are back in Ontario having to deal with the possibility of another Walkerton because this government has not acted fast enough.

On top of that, the government failed to spend over \$200 million in municipal infrastructure funds targeted for water projects.

We obtained a copy of a cabinet document showing that the minister intended to delay implementing the nutrient management regulations until possibly 2016. That's for 97% of farms in this province. This is after Walkerton. That would be 16 years later.

Minister, you have failed to follow through on your commitment to implement Walkerton. Don't stand up there and say that you have. In the 2001-02 budget the government set aside \$200 million in municipal infrastructure projects in OSTAR and the millennium part-

nership initiatives. The ministry officials confirmed that over half of that money was intended for municipal water projects but only \$29 million of the \$200 million was actually spent, leaving over \$100 million in budgeted money for municipal water projects unspent for that year. I guess it must be the red tape. They bragged so much about cutting red tape, yet they said that they withheld this money because some of the municipalities were having trouble fulfilling the requirements in the application forms.

On air: on World Asthma Day my leader, Howard Hampton, and I made an announcement that we were setting up a puffer bank for used asthma puffers to show the impact of the Conservative government's polluting policies.

In Ontario, 2,030 people will die prematurely from dirty air, including 530 in Toronto and 360 in the rest of the GTA. That's according to the Ontario Medical Association's latest figures. Yet we've called on the government repeatedly to bring in intense conservation programs.

As my leader, Howard Hampton, recently announced through our Public Power document, we will close down the coal-fired plants by 2007. Part of the way to do this is to get serious about conservation and efficiency. We announced a 20-20 plan based on a successful plan in California that works, that would help people conserve and be more efficient in their use of energy.

The government has done nothing. In fact, the conservation plan we put into place when we were in government went out the door. This government has nothing to brag about on World Environment Day. On the contrary, they should be ashamed of themselves.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): My question is to the Deputy Premier. Ontario Power Generation cannot be a money-laundering operation for unwanted expenses of ministers of the Harris-Eves government. Yet that is exactly what has happened with this recently published report—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): We're going to have to watch our language. The word "money-laundering" borders on it. I would ask the member to kindly try and think about what he's saying.

Mr Bryant: Withdrawn.

Look, there are various ways to describe what has happened, but money that ought to have been disclosed through freedom of information, that ought to have been paid out of the consolidated revenue fund, that ought to have been claimed by the Minister of Energy, was funnelled through Ontario Power Generation.

There are a lot of problems with that. The first one is, the minister is keeping expenses from the public. You

cannot hide expenses from the public. You know, when you funnel it through a government enterprise corporation like OPG, that's exactly what happens, because there's no way to get access to that information.

So I say to you, Minister, is it all right for Premier Eves and the Eves government to funnel money through government enterprise corporations as the Minister of Energy did last summer?

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

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I think the trip you're speaking about was a trip with respect to Scotland and London from Paris and Rome. The trip was organized, endorsed and recommended by OPG. OPG paid for ground transportation. I know that you personally talked to OPG today and OPG told you it was an expense for ground transportation.

Further to that, the nub of the problem is this: I didn't file any expenses for the government to pay for the trip in Paris at all. Nothing; not a meal, not a hotel, not a bagel, or a can of Tropicana orange juice. The problem you're faced with is this: you think somehow that, in your language, as a shareholder of OPG organizing the trip, we have reached reptilian, sewer-dwelling levels in this Legislature.

1410

Mr Bryant: I say to the minister, because I take it you're going to answer these questions, is it your position that it is OK to submit this kind of expense through Ontario Power Generation, and have you submitted any other such expenses through Ontario Power Generation when you were the Minister of Energy?

Hon Mr Stockwell: Yes, I think ground transportation on a trip is acceptable, organized by OPG. And yes, you know full well I incurred and submitted no other expenses to OPG.

I would also note that the story in the Globe and Mail today, as torqued as it was, didn't indicate to the people who were reading it that not one thin dime was expensed to the government by me for my family that was on my trip. I take great exception to seeing members quoted in the paper suggesting that if you're going to go on a two-week trip as a minister of the crown, you can't take your family but not charge the government. This is absolutely patently absurd. You've got to crawl out of this world you're living in. The bar you're setting is so high, not a soul on this earth could clear it.

Mr Bryant: The minister doth protest too much. I am not asking about the expenses of your family. I am asking about Ontario Power Generation.

It is not OK for a minister of the crown to have a company that makes money in the energy sector have an expense account for the minister. It is not OK for the Attorney General to have a law firm pick up the expenses of him travelling across Europe, and he would never do that. It is not OK for a housing minister to submit expenses to a developer for ground transportation on a

business trip to Europe. It is not OK for the government of Ontario to have a minister submit expenses for his business to Ontario Power Generation, and if you think that is OK, I would like to know, what other times did you submit expenses through Ontario Power Generation, and do you continue to submit expenses through government enterprise corporations today?

Hon Mr Stockwell: You know what? I answered that question. This was it, the only time; I never have again.

This is just how absurd we've become in this place. He's comparing a housing minister and a developer paying for ground transportation. News flash: as the Minister of Energy, you are the single shareholder for Ontario Power Generation, the single shareholder. The Minister of Housing doesn't own the development company. It's just patently absurd, and I am taking great offence because I know the situation is simply this: when you file expenses, you're ratcheted and beat up. When you don't file expenses, you're ratcheted and beat up. Yes, this is an acceptable expenditure, organized by OPG, meetings operated by OPG, attended by myself, staff, and the deputy minister. This is a seriously flawed line of questioning.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr Bryant: This is a seriously flawed line of reasoning for the former Minister of Energy. I'm sorry I have to ask this question, but I have to ask this question. I take it you submitted expenses through Ontario Power Generation. Did you submit any invoices or expenses to any other corporation that you had dealings with during the European business trip? Would that be OK, Minister? Did you do that or not?

Hon Mr Stockwell: No, Mr Speaker.

Mr Bryant: Again, I say to the Minister of Energy, my question is not about the business trip itself and the 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.

However, that's not what the minister told a member of the press gallery in January of this year. The press secretary to the Premier of Ontario today said that when she was press secretary to you, she was told to inform this journalist that you in fact did not bring your family along. Were you telling the truth then, or are you telling the truth now?

Hon Mr Stockwell: You know, this is just insane. I am now in a situation with a member across the floor making an allegation that he heard from a reporter that somebody in my office was told to say something that wasn't true. That is such a stretch. That is completely inaccurate. I would never, ever in my political life tell somebody to go and tell a reporter something that I knew was factually incorrect.

I have great respect for all honourable members. I have respect for you. I am an honourable member. My staffer didn't say that. I believe the member of the gallery may have been confused—as he was confused this afternoon at 12 o'clock when he went on the air and said I spent \$27,000 alone in Europe when the \$27,000

included me, staff and the deputy minister. He confused that.

Let's get it together. He possibly could have been confused about the others.

Mr Bryant: Minister, there remains a serious problem with respect to public disclosure of information of expenses involving government enterprise corporations not subject to the freedom of information act. We don't know whether OPG paid for items for you as energy minister in addition to this ground transportation. That is totally inappropriate.

So my question to you as a minister is—and it's not just with respect to OPG and Hydro One; it's with respect to all government enterprise corporations not subject to freedom of information act requests: will the government release all expenses submitted through those corporations that involve a minister of the crown? Will you release—

Interjection.

Mr Bryant: All the ministers doth protest too much.

You know very well that there are monies and expenses being funnelled through government enterprise corporations to avoid public disclosure. You know it.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The member for St Paul's.

Mr Bryant: So my question is, Minister, so that you can assure the public that in fact—

Interjection.

The Speaker: The member take his seat. The last warning for the Minister of Energy. If he yells out one more time, he's gone.

Sorry, to the member for St Paul's.

Mr Bryant: So that you can assure the public, Minister, that in fact all expenses that are put through OPG, Hydro One and otherwise—and I seem to remember you having a lot of problems with some expenses involving Hydro One a year ago. You had a big problem with outrageous expenses from the CEO for Hydro One. So I would think that you would care about this.

So my question is this: will you disclose the expenses, currently undisclosed to the public, that go through government enterprise corporations? Will you do that?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I say to the member opposite, without any equivocation whatsoever, the only expense incurred by OPG was for ground transportation. Never was there expense incurred by OPG on my behalf for any other expense on any other trip for any other purpose. I will tell you, that is the absolute, categorical position. I know the member spoke to OPG today and that OPG told you exactly the same thing.

The Speaker: New question?

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): To the Minister of Environment: Minister, you can be as indignant and as histrionic as you want to be, but excuse us for being skeptical over here, because this is the second time we know of that your hand has been caught in the cookie jar. You were forced to pay back over \$3,000 in bar tabs, expenses that you and your staff didn't declare before. You declared it only after it was in the media.

1420

What makes it even worse, last summer, when your government's privatization and deregulation scheme was sending hydro rates soaring all across Ontario and when our coal-fired plants were belching deadly smog into the air, where were you? What was the minister doing? You were living the high life on the boulevards of Paris and Rome and sending the bills to hydro ratepayers. That's right. Amazingly, Ontario Power Generation picked up thousands of dollars worth of these expenses.

Minister, I consider this a gift to you from OPG. I want to know, why did you not declare this to the Integrity Commissioner of this province?

Hon Mr Stockwell: First of all, on this trip, I charged two types of charges: my flight and my hotel room. I charged not a meal, not an orange juice, not a bagel—my flights and my hotel room, nothing more.

The fact is this: it never crossed my mind that anyone would think ground transportation would be a gift. The minute I saw it in the story today, I phoned the Integrity Commissioner's office and asked them to look into it. They said, "Thank you very much. We will investigate to determine if it's a gift." Personally, I think it's a stretch to suggest that ground transportation is a gift.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Among the many problems here is that Mittelstaedt indicates that the minister says he decided to pick up his hotel cost during the six-night stay in Paris because there was so little business being conducted.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I never said that.

Mr Kormos: Well, the Mittelstaedt article indicates the minister says he picked up hotel costs. It also says that the only expense OPG paid was the cost of a van rental during the stay in Paris, yet OPG says they spent \$5,000 to \$10,000; \$5,000 to \$10,000 is far in excess of van rental, even in the city of Paris, for but one week. Minister, why is there that discrepancy in the report of the facts?

Hon Mr Stockwell: Mr Mittelstaedt totally torqued and fabricated that story—absolutely torqued and fabricated. I never at any time said the agenda was so skinny. That is torqued and fabricated. What I said was that because we couldn't get a connecting flight to Rome, the stay was prolonged. I said that I will pay for the hotel and all other expenses, as any honourable member would do. Not a nickel was spent by the taxpayer on my children or wife, who were attending.

Mr Mittelstaedt torqued and prevaricated to get a story he had been working on for six months, because all he could get out of it was a ground transportation issue. He talked to 15 people, asking them, "Did OPG or did anyone else pay for these?" Fifteen people said no. He spent six months on that story. He had to file something. He torqued it to the highest order.

Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Labour): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: If I may, just quickly, I have a concern with regard to the last question of the member for St Paul's. In his last question, he stated that regularly

members of cabinet are using funds from government agencies for other purposes. With the greatest of respect, Mr Speaker, it states very clearly in the standing orders that you can't make allegations of that nature against another member. I would ask you if you can check the Instant Hansard and see what he said. I know he's an honourable member and he will withdraw it. It was emotional, but he will withdraw it.

The Speaker: We will confer with the table quickly.

I thank the member. No one heard that, if anybody did say that. We will be able to get the Hansard, which isn't quite this instant. He would withdraw it if he can, at any time.

We will listen very carefully. We're in very emotional territory here when we get into these circumstances. I would ask all members to watch very carefully.

I will say this: I'm going to be on the edge of my seat listening, as is the table, and we'll listen to the best of our ability to make sure nothing is said that is unparliamentary, and if it is, we will act very quickly.

The member for Niagara Centre.

Mr Kormos: If the minister could only feign sincerity as well as he feigns indignation, his career would be established.

There are some serious problems here in terms of the numbers. OPG is reported as saying they spent \$5,000 to \$10,000 on your junket to France, England, Scotland and Italy. You insist that you only accepted money for one week of transportation while in Paris during a period of time that you regarded as vacation time, such that you paid your own hotel bills.

You have accused Mr Mittelstaedt, a veteran newspaper, a veteran journalist, of prevarication. The facts in his article are a serious indictment and cause serious concerns. I put to you, Minister, in view of the controversy that now exists and your statements regarding Mittelstaedt and his prevarication, that there is a serious need for a thorough investigation into this matter. Will you step aside while that inquiry takes place?

Hon Mr Stockwell: This is bordering on Fellini-like. You've got to think you're in a Fellini movie at this point in time. I never said—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: They provided ground transportation in Paris and in Rome. I told you that's what they supplied, and that's what they paid for—nothing more, nothing less. If you believe there was anything inappropriate about that—I phoned the Integrity Commissioner's office and asked them to investigate. They said I phoned in a timely fashion, considering the story was in the paper today. I think we should all give the Integrity Commissioner, the Honourable Justice Coulter Osborne, who had approved these expenses previously I might add, the opportunity to review this before we start hanging members in this Legislature from the gallows because one reporter who provided no facts in this story decided this was the approach to take. I would give you the equal break with respect to Justice Coulter Osborne as I gave the member from Windsor with respect to the Purolator

package. Let's see what the Integrity Commissioner says, because I believe categorically, without debate, that this is a stretch of epic, stilted proportions.

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question for the Minister of Health. New Democrats have called on you for a full public inquiry into SARS and for whistle-blower protection to ensure that health care providers do not suffer any reprisals from their employers if they come forward.

On Tuesday, you took exception to that, and you argued that if there was any evidence that an employer was intimidating or threatening a health care worker, to let you know and you would stop it right away. Virginia Wooland was an employee of the Toronto-Sunnybrook Regional Cancer Centre. At a press conference at the centre on February 10, 2003, she asked you a question about long waiting lists for cancer surgery. She was fired three days later. Her dismissal letter specifically references the incident of February 10, the same day she asked you a question at a press conference. I would like to know what you have done about her employer, Cancer Care Ontario, an agency of your government, and what have you done to get her job back?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): In reference to your question, I want to state that under subsection 95(4) of the Health Protection and Promotion Act, "No action or other proceeding shall be instituted against a person for making a report in good faith in respect of a communicable disease or a reportable disease in accordance with part IV."

The honourable member might remember that in the early stages of the SARS outbreak, I designated, as I have the power to do under the act, that SARS be a communicable disease as well as a reportable and a virulent disease. So the protections she seeks for health care workers are in fact statutorily in place.

Ms Martel: The question was: what have you done about Virginia's employer, and what have you done to get her job back? You stood in this House Tuesday and took great exception to the question raised by my leader that somehow a health care worker in this province would suffer reprisal from an employer. That's what happened—an employer, I remind you, that your ministry provides full funding to. When your press secretary, Mr Paul Cantin, was asked about this incident on March 8, he said, "The minister could not comment on a personnel issue." I asked you about this matter on Tuesday, outside this Legislature, and what you were going to do to get Virginia her job back. You said you didn't know anything about this matter.

Minister, if this can happen to Virginia Wooland, it can happen to any health care worker who dares to raise concerns about health care in the province. We have workers today who are here from the Scarborough General Hospital, front-line heroes in the battle against

SARS. Given what's happened to Virginia and your complete lack of responsibility and your complete lack of action to do anything about her case, how can they be guaranteed they're not going to be fired if they come forward with concerns about SARS?

1430

Hon Mr Clement: She would be the first person standing up if I interfered with an employer-employee relationship with an arm's-length agency. She would be the first one standing in her place, demanding my immediate resignation and probably a public inquiry on top of that. So she speaks out of both sides of her mouth, I must say.

When she asks what protections I can give to our health care workers who are required under the HPPA to do their job, I cited subsection 95(4) of the HPPA, which I am duty-bound, as the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, to uphold and enforce, and she has my commitment that I will do my job. That is the answer to her question.

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): My question is to the government House leader. I heard you say it, and maybe you misspoke, but you could tell us what you meant by it: I heard you say in answer to the question in this House just now that the Honourable Justice Coulter Osborne, the Integrity Commissioner, initially approved of your expenses.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): Yes. Travel expenses.

Mr Bryant: Could you explain that? Could you elaborate on that? And would you disclose to the House, or otherwise to the public, this said approval?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I was speaking about the expenses that were filed during the process of this trip to Justice Coulter Osborne. All the government expenses were filed to him. He approved of all the expenses and signed off on them, saying they were appropriate and properly submitted and they were appropriately and properly repaid.

Mr Bryant: I remind the member—he will know, as government House leader and otherwise—that the Accountability for Expenses Act (Cabinet Ministers and Opposition Leaders), introduced with much fanfare last year, has a pretty gaping loophole in it in that the act requires reviewable expenses, disclosure of expenses that are expensed through the consolidated revenue fund. Of course, Ontario Power Generation expenses would not be through the consolidated revenue fund. We would never know that that expense had taken place, had you not told us and, in addition, that the expense was disclosed or the expense was incurred in the performance of a ministerial duty.

There is no way to ensure that government enterprise corporation expenses incurred by a minister will be disclosed. So my question is, and you may want to refer it to the minister responsible, will the government agree to fill

this loophole to ensure that government enterprise corporation expenses are in fact covered under this bill?

Hon Mr Stockwell: Chair of Management Board?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture): If the member will recall, as we went through the review of the expenses for all members, all the cabinet ministers and certainly the Leader of the Opposition, one of the things I said at the time, and it's quite true and continues to be so, was that we continue to review the rules from time to time with the Integrity Commissioner. This is something that is a constant process; it's a process that continues. It did not end at the time we brought in the rules. So we do continue to review them.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): My question is for my honourable friend the Minister of Transportation. Early in the new year, I consulted with the 11 municipal councils in Waterloo-Wellington, challenging them to look to the promise of the future and highlight for me their transportation priorities for the next five years and beyond. On April 10, municipal representatives from my riding and I met with the minister to discuss what we are calling the Waterloo-Wellington transportation action plan. On May 1, at the first available opportunity, I informed the House about our transportation issues, which include implementing the corridor study of Highways 7 and 8 between Kitchener and Stratford; a new four-lane Highway 7 between Kitchener and Guelph; assistance for the county of Wellington to rebuild Highway 24 from Guelph to Cambridge; a repaired and upgraded Highway 6 from Fergus to Mount Forest; and Waterloo region's light rail transit initiative and other important transportation projects.

Could the minister inform the House what action the government is taking to assist us in Waterloo-Wellington with these transportation challenges?

Hon Frank Klees (Minister of Transportation): I'm pleased to do that. I want to commend the member from Waterloo-Wellington for his very strong advocacy on the part of his constituents.

I did, indeed, meet with representatives of the municipality as arranged by the honourable member. I'm pleased to report to him, as well as to his constituents, that in response to that meeting and the various issues that were brought forward to us at that time, we will, in fact, be completing the planning for a new Highway 7 from Kitchener to Guelph to relieve congestion by providing additional access to Highway 401 through its connection with the Hanlon Expressway.

I can also report to the member that we'll be widening Highway 8 between Conestoga expressway and Fergus Avenue and designing the next phase of the widening from Fergus Avenue southeasterly to Grand River. In addition to that, a number of the initiatives that were brought forward will be taken into consideration and put into our planning process.

This member is doing an outstanding job for his constituents in advocating for transportation issues. I just want to say that.

Mr Arnott: I thank the minister for his response. It's exciting to note that in recent days, work commenced to resurface Highway 89 between Mount Forest and Conn and repair two bridges across the Saugeen River, a \$5.4 million job.

This is hopefully the first of many responses to our Waterloo-Wellington transportation action plan, and I would expect that members of the House would agree that improving our highway system is only one part of the solution in reducing gridlock, creating jobs and improving our quality of life.

Will the minister update the House on actions he is taking to reduce gridlock and continue to improve the safe movement of people and goods in our Waterloo-Wellington area?

Hon Mr Klees: I'm glad to do that. The fact is, under our made-in-Ontario Smart Growth strategy, our government has made some long-term commitments to transit, as well as transportation—some \$13.5 billion committed over the next 10 years to deal with the kind of issues that the member has brought to our attention. In fact, last August, as part of our Golden Horseshoe Transit Investment Partnerships, we provided Waterloo some \$5.3 million to help expand bus service and to make improvements in their transit facilities. I point out to the member that this is in addition to the \$2.9 million allocated to Waterloo over the last two years to help replace and refurbish transit vehicles.

I also want to assure the member and his constituents that based on our long-term commitment to transit in this province, his constituents, the area of Waterloo and, in fact, right across the Golden Horseshoe, there will be tremendous opportunities for implementing transit-related initiatives in this province.

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): The question is to the government House leader. I asked you before about submission of all travel expenses to the Honourable Coulter Osborne. I understand you said that you submitted the government expenses. My question is, just so I'm very, very clear, did you submit the Ontario Power Generation expense to the Integrity Commissioner, and did he approve that OPG expense?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I never had it, I never submitted it, so Mr Coulter Osborne would never approve it. I did phone Mr Coulter Osborne this morning, considering the story that was in the paper, and asked him to adjudicate on it. His staff said to me, "Thank you for phoning. We will review it and get back." That's what I did.

Mr Bryant: The clear implication was that you said the Honourable Coulter Osborne approved all expenses. In any event, the Integrity Commissioner, I take it, is now

going to speak to this issue of whether or not the OPG expense was—

Hon Mr Stockwell: Yes.

Mr Bryant: Fine. Look, I'm not going to make any apologies at all as a member of the opposition for asking these questions, and you'd be doing the same thing if you were sitting over here.

1440

I say to the minister again, we clearly have a loophole in this bill, and to avoid any other such future excursions of this nature, I say to you in this Legislature, it would be best for the people of Ontario and for the government of Ontario if we filled this loophole. I understand the minister responsible says you're reviewing these things. You're always reviewing these things. There's clearly a loophole. I ask the minister responsible, and he'll have to be referred to you through the House leader, will you fill this loophole? Specifically, Minister, will you ensure that government enterprise corporation expenses such as this, currently reviewed by the Integrity Commissioner, become subject to full disclosure under your much-heralded bill, the Cabinet Ministers' and Opposition Leaders' Expense Review and Accountability Act. Will you change the bill to fit the loophole—

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

Hon Mr Stockwell: What I think we should do is let Justice Coulter Osborne review the situation and do his job. Now I can see how we can have a difference of opinion. If I somehow misspoke myself that gave you that impression, I apologize. It was always the expenses I was speaking about that were approved. But I will say this: as honourable members in this place, you've asked me a direct question, "What were these expenses?" and I've given you a direct answer. They were all ground transportation in Rome and Paris. I will stand by that statement at any time.

I asked Justice Coulter Osborne to review it. I took this trip and charged only flight and hotel. My children and wife—not a thin dime was charged to the government. If you know, why would I not charge a hotel and food and all that other expense that you have on a trip, but somehow if I thought this was inappropriate, charge that? There's an inconsistency here. I'm saying to you opposite, why don't we allow Justice Coulter Osborne, the Integrity Commissioner, to review this and adjudicate? I honestly believe that Mr Coulter Osborne will come back and say—

Mr Bryant: So I shouldn't ask?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I'm not saying you don't ask. I'm just saying that I think he'll come back and say, "We may just have a tempest in a teapot."

SENIORS' MONTH

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question today is for the minister responsible for seniors. Last week you introduced the Mandatory Retirement Elimination Act, an important piece of legislation that repre-

sents a major step forward in strengthening Ontario's human rights protections for all seniors. The introduction of this bill is particularly fitting because June is Seniors' Month here in Ontario. June is a time to celebrate and recognize the important role our seniors have played in the growth of our great province.

Minister, given the continuing contributions of our growing seniors populations, I'm sure seniors across Ontario would like to know the theme of this year's Seniors' Month and why it is important for all Ontarians to recognize and support our seniors every month of the year.

Hon Carl DeFaria (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): I thank the member for his question. As Ontario's minister responsible for seniors, I'm very proud of the enormous contributions Ontario's 1.5 million seniors have made and continue to make to our great province. Seniors' Month has been celebrated in Ontario for over 20 years, and I am pleased our government not only continues to support this tradition, but actively promotes Seniors' Month activities throughout the Ontario seniors' secretariat.

This year's Seniors' Month theme "Footsteps to Follow" highlights the wonderful example seniors have set and continue to set in sharing, learning and leading. Seniors' Month is a time to honour the sacrifices and contributions of men and women who have built this province and who continue to contribute to the quality of life we enjoy.

Mr Dunlop: Like most other members of this Legislature, I would like to recognize the important role seniors play in my own constituency, the riding of Simcoe North. I like to point out that usually at least once a year I have seniors' seminars in the town of Midland and in the city of Orillia. They're well attended by over 1,000 seniors at those two events. I think it's important that all members of this House provide that type of venue for our seniors because there's a lot of information available to seniors that they like to receive as well.

Minister, please tell me what is available from your ministry to help me, other MPPs and people in my constituency who wish to actively celebrate and promote Seniors' Month?

Hon Mr DeFaria: I encourage each member here today to help celebrate Seniors' Month by hosting or attending events that recognize older Ontarians in their respective constituencies. Each member will receive a communication package from my ministry to promote Seniors' Month events within their own communities. My ministry has also produced a poster and other materials that members can use and access to promote Seniors' Month in newsletters and local newspapers. Seniors' Month event listings from across the province will be posted and accessible on the Ontario seniors' secretariat Web site. I also encourage members to take advantage of the availability of a guide to programs and services for seniors in Ontario, a comprehensive listing of seniors' services offered by different levels of government and the community.

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): To the Minister of the Environment: today's article revealing facts around your two-week junket in Europe wasn't written by a Jayson Blair of the New York Times; it was written by Martin Mittelstaedt, a respected, long-time Canadian journalist. He reports that your staff person indicated that the OPG money was only to rent a van for use around Paris. He reports that it was during the Paris stay that you decided to pick up six nights of your hotel tab because there was so little business to be done that it in fact was a vacation. The article also states that OPG indicates that it spent \$5,000 to \$10,000 to subsidize your junket to Europe. Five to ten thousand dollars is at great variance with the cost of a van for one week in the city of Paris.

You've accused Mr Mittelstaedt of prevarication. You've called Mr Mittelstaedt a liar. In view of the discrepancies between your story and the reportage of Mr Mittelstaedt, will you stand aside so that this matter can be inquired into to determine which of you is telling the truth?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I think he should look at the story very carefully. I think it's very revealing. I think you would do very well to read it. The quote that you're attributing to me, "Because we had a prolonged stay in Paris we arranged meetings that were a little sparse, so I decided it was better I paid them"—I didn't say that. I said that because we had trouble connecting to Rome, and extended the trip, that's when we decided to pay.

Mr Mittelstaedt wrote what he wrote. All I can tell you is the rationale for what was done. I didn't file expense claims in Paris. The government didn't pay.

When you started accosting me earlier, your claim was about charging the government inappropriately. Coulter Osborne reviewed them and suggested a number of them shouldn't be repaid. Now I don't file expenses, you don't have claims and I'm supposed to stand up here and defend the fact that I didn't spend any money. This is what is Felliniesque about this place.

Mr Kormos: Scotland; London, England; Paris, France; Rome, Italy; the Spanish steps; the Trevi fountain—a week of leisure. And while electricity consumers in this province are paying skyrocketing prices, OPG subsidizes your junket to the tune of \$5,000 to \$10,000. Your staff person says that OPG paid for but one week of van in Paris. Five to ten Gs buys a whole lot more, even in Paris, than the rental of a van for a week. You've accused Mittelstaedt of lying. You called him a prevaricator. You were very clear about that. You indicate that he's prevaricating not just once or twice, but thrice.

Somebody's not telling the truth. Minister, if you're interested in the determination as to what is the truth, will you stand aside so that this matter can be inquired into?

1450

Hon Mr Stockwell: There were 12 meetings in 14 days on that trip. I met with a significant number of agencies and groups in Europe, in Rome and Paris. The

meetings took place at the behest of OPG. I can tell you that OPG paid for ground transportation and only ground transportation. I charged not a meal, not a drink, not a muffin, not an orange juice to the taxpayers of the province of Ontario—nothing. The fact is simply this: if there is anything inappropriate about this, I'd like to hear from Justice Coulter Osborne.

I will be very frank with you. You hold Mr Mittelstaedt in high esteem; I don't. I hold Justice Coulter Osborne to a far higher level of impartiality and believability. My suggestion to you is that we see what the Honourable Justice Coulter Osborne, who was the second-highest presiding officer of the Court of Appeal in this province, has to say, because if it came to Mittelstaedt or Osborne, I'd pick Osborne.

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Deputy Premier. It has to do with the situation at Ipperwash that demands a public inquiry.

There is strong evidence of inappropriate political involvement in what should have been a police matter, and the political involvement includes the then Premier. The George family launched a civil case because the government consistently refused to call a public inquiry. Now the George family has said they would drop the civil case and avoid a three-month trial if the government would call a public inquiry. Recognizing the seriousness of this issue—that is, political involvement at the most senior level of the province of Ontario in a policing operation—and recognizing that the George family have agreed that they would drop the civil case if a public inquiry is called, will you, Deputy, today agree to call a public inquiry?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I will refer the question from the honourable member to the Attorney General.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): As the member opposite knows, there are outstanding civil matters in front of the courts at this time. We have done everything to bring those matters forward. The subjects that are being considered in the civil action would be the same that would be considered in a public inquiry. The trial is set to begin on September 8, not too far in the distant future, and therefore I think that it's incumbent on us to allow that court to go through its process. A decision with regard to a public inquiry can be made after that.

Mr Phillips: I would just say to the public: this is a matter of extreme seriousness; evidence of the Premier saying on the day of the shooting that he wanted the occupiers out of the park within 24 hours; the police saying, "That's not what we want. We want more time."

Nothing could be more serious than a charge of political involvement by the Premier with the police. The George family don't want this civil case. Yes, you've done everything you can. You spent \$3 million of taxpayer money fighting the George family, and we will see

another \$2 million—the former Premier himself, over \$1 million of taxpayer money, fighting the George family. The government lawyers called poor Sam George "a terrorist" at these civil cases. The family has said, "We will drop the civil case," but they want assurance that you will call a public inquiry. They've got absolutely no faith in your government calling the public inquiry, because for eight years you have refused to do it.

I say to you again, Attorney General, this is a travesty and an attack on a family. The government should be doing the decent thing and calling a public inquiry. I say again to you, will you do the decent thing today? Will you agree finally to call an appropriate public inquiry so that the people of Ontario can find the truth about what happened at Ipperwash?

Hon Mr Sterling: We too are concerned, and feel for the Dudley George family as well.

As I mentioned before in my previous response, this matter is close to coming to trial. During that process the Dudley George family have had the opportunity to examine the evidence, some of which is not characterized by the statements made by my colleague opposite. But we will let the trial occur, and then, of course, a public inquiry can take place.

SARS

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): My question is for the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. There have been a great many heroes during the SARS outbreak—nurses, doctors and public health officials, to name but a few—who have worked tirelessly, night and day, to protect the health of the people of Toronto, but there have been many unsung heroes as well.

Will the minister please inform the House about the important role that the Toronto-area community care access centres have played during the SARS outbreak?

Hon Dan Newman (Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'd like to thank the hard-working member for Waterloo-Wellington for his question today.

The member is absolutely correct. The Toronto-area CCACs continue to play an important role in helping us to deal with the impact of the SARS outbreak. The staffs of these community care access centres deserve our thanks for their dedication and hard work during this difficult time.

CCACs helped us alleviate pressure on our hospital system by coordinating patient transfers and discharges, so that we could reopen emergency rooms and restart surgeries. They also monitored hospitals and helped to develop screening protocols for the community and home care sectors.

They are instrumental in our response to this outbreak and should be recognized for their contributions.

Mr Arnott: I think we're all very pleased to hear that the community care access centres are making such a profound difference for so many people, in light of the

SARS problem. I personally know how dedicated and hard-working the CCAC professionals are, and the staffs of the Waterloo and Wellington-Dufferin CCACs at home are outstanding examples.

I'd like to ask the associate minister what kind of contributions CCACs outside the GTA have made in the effort to contain the spread of SARS.

Hon Mr Newman: CCACs across Ontario have undertaken a number of measures to ensure the health and safety of those who are receiving health care at home as well as those in long-term-care facilities. In fact, across Ontario, CCACs are closely monitoring the status and the categories of hospitals affected by SARS and are working out plans for patient transfers and discharges accordingly. CCACs are also establishing the extent of screening protocols for caregivers, staff, clients and visitors, depending on their region. They're all working hard to ensure that those needing a transfer to a long-term-care facility get one of their top choices and get that choice as quickly as possible.

I'm proud to say that the Ernie Eves government is committed to helping to provide even better home care across Ontario through record investments in this sector.

I once again want to thank our home care professionals for all their hard work and dedication.

HEALTHY FUTURES PROGRAM

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture's provincially funded program paid 67% of the cost to upgrade wells and protect groundwater from surface water contamination. The program started as a result of the tragedy at Walkerton, to provide financial assistance for well decommissioning or upgrading.

Well, surprise, surprise: the funding has run dry and waiting lists for this program are getting longer and longer.

Minister, you've been called upon to allow the transfer of funds from the decommissioning fund into the upgrade fund to deal with the immediate needs for well upgrades. The funding ran dry weeks ago, and rural Ontarians are waiting for this government to wake up and act.

Will you act immediately and allow the transfer of funds, so that rural Ontarians can make the necessary upgrades? Will you also commit to inject the additional funds necessary, so that all of us in rural Ontario can ensure safe, clean drinking water for our families?

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I'm happy to talk about healthy futures for Ontario agriculture. Healthy futures was one of the programs designed by this government, under a previous minister. It's a \$90-million program that was designed to enhance and promote responsible production, processing and distribution systems in the agri-food industry. It has been a great success. Over time, we have invested in a wide range of products to ensure that rural Ontario has the opportunities to ensure we have a healthy future for our young people and for our environment in those areas.

We've had over 300 applications. The system is now closed; the dollars have been spent. We had 119 projects that have been approved. The value of these projects is really insurmountable when you think about the benefits they have given rural Ontario.

We always have questions about reinvesting, and the government is looking at new programs all the time, which we might invest in.

1500

Mr Peters: Thank you, Minister, for the non-answer. I asked you something specific about one aspect of the healthy futures program.

Minister, it's been three years since Walkerton and your government continues to think it's acceptable to sit back and put the health of Ontarians at risk. Fifty-five per cent of the people who have had their wells tested have had results with some form of contamination, and estimates indicate as many as 100,000 wells will require decommissioning and upgrades in this province.

It's categorically unacceptable, three years after Walkerton, to have dirty drinking water in this province. I'm calling on you again, Minister, to not only act to allow the transfer of those funds to the upgrades, as you've been requested by individuals, but to inject a new round of funds with the dollars necessary to ensure that all rural Ontario has safe and clean drinking water for their families.

Minister, will you assure rural Ontario that you will act immediately, today, and continue to expand this vital program for water in rural Ontario?

Hon Mrs Johns: Let me say, we have a lot of programs we're working on to strengthen the environment and the water in rural Ontario. We have nutrient management. In this government's budget, in the throne speech and in the campaign documents, we're very clear that we're going to invest in the environment in rural Ontario. We're very, very clear about that.

We're also clear, through the Ministry of the Environment, that we're going to work on source protection and many of the other recommendations that have come from Justice O'Connor's report. Those too will benefit rural Ontario.

The commitment, when it comes to water, when it comes to the environment, when it comes to rural Ontario, is second to none by this side of the House. Healthy futures, this particular program, was designed because the OFA and other groups put together envelopes that they wanted to have the dollars put to. We would like each group to spend in all of the envelopes that they requested of us in the early stages. That's our goal: to have best management practices look at all the aspects of the proposal and make sure that each—

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

PHARMACISTS' DISPENSING FEES

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): My question is for the Minister of Health. Ontario pharmacists dispense almost \$2 billion worth of prescription drugs on the

Ontario Drug Benefit Formulary operated by the provincial government. For this professional service, pharmacists are paid \$6.47 per scrip. The problem is that that's been the same rate for the last 13 years in this province, save and except for a small period of time during the NDP social contract where they clawed that back by 20%.

In all areas, the cost of operating a pharmacy has grown in this province, and pharmacists have much greater overhead costs. In a letter from the then Minister of Health back in 2001, we gave the pharmacists the assurance, and I quote from the letter, "Negotiations on a dispensing fee increase will begin in March at your convenience."

Minister, that was 28 months ago. Could you please tell the House when we're going to recognize the professional fees that pharmacists deserve and not the ones they're coping with in this province?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I thank the honourable member from Burlington for the question. Indeed, his recitation of the history of this is quite accurate, in particular that under the NDP government's social contract days they actually reduced the dispensing fee, a reduction that we reversed in 1999, and of course we're moving further to address this issue as well.

The honourable member might be interested to know that I formed a joint working group last year between my ministry and the Ontario Pharmacists' Association. I asked them to come back to me with an action plan to identify their priority issues and recommendations in a broader sense, not just the dispensing fee but a broader sense about the role of pharmacists in our health care system.

I can tell you we're now acting on that report. On May 2, just last month, I met with the OPA and I mentioned their issues. I indicated that we are addressing these as soon as we possibly can.

Mr Jackson: Minister, the Ontario drug benefit plan is the fastest-growing expense in the government of Ontario. It actually rose by over 11% last year. It's the most expensive program that we offer in health.

For the past several years, drug manufacturers have been raising their prices beyond what is legislatively permitted. In recent years, most drug manufacturers have been insisting that pharmacists buy their drugs from a wholesaler and that they pay an extra upcharge of between 3% and 10%. Today there are over 200 drugs on the Ontario Drug Benefit Formulary that pharmacists dispense—they do not cover their actual costs of stocking them and taking care of them and putting them in their inventory.

The question I have for you is this. We have a regulation that says that the manufacturer of the product must continue to be able to supply the products at the drug benefit price in a quantity that is sufficient to meet the demands for the product. Why are we not enforcing this regulation in Ontario to make sure that pharmacists can dispense drugs without losing money?

Hon Mr Clement: As the honourable member knows, there are a number of different aspects to this, including the costs to the operator, the costs associated with the pharmaceutical industry, the costs to the pharmacist, and of course I'm sure the honourable member would agree with me that the cost to the taxpayer has got to be foremost in our minds as well.

I want to assure the honourable member that various ministries in the government, including the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, are actively engaged in discussions with the pharmaceutical industry on their roles and responsibilities. I can tell you, and this is probably unprecedented, that we actually had a pharmacist sitting on our drug strategy review committee with the purpose of getting the pharmacists' perspective there, not just that of the pharmacy industry but the pharmacists' perspective, on reviewing exactly how our system works, how we can improve it for the future, and how we can protect not only Ontarians but the various stakeholders that have a legitimate interest at play.

HOME CARE

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Minister of Health. Yesterday, Gloria Rohrbacher of Capreol was told by the Manitoulin-Sudbury CCAC that her 85-year-old mother's homemaking services were being cut off. She's not the only one. The CCAC is eliminating homemaking services for the vast majority of clients in Sudbury and Manitoulin and is not accepting new requests for help except in very limited circumstances. To add insult to injury, Gloria was given a list of local homemaking service providers where she must now buy services for her mom. The CCAC has said that increasing demands for care and limited financial resources led to this decision.

Minister, what are you going to do to ensure that seniors in Sudbury and Manitoulin get the homemaking services they need from the CCAC?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): To the associate minister.

Hon Dan Newman (Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Mr Speaker, I understand that the VON's Sudbury branch will be providing homemaking services for the full term of their contract with the Manitoulin-Sudbury Community Care Access Centre. I also understand that there were some contractual discussions between the community care access centre and the VON, but this is something that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care does not get involved in. I can tell you that our government appreciates the work that is carried on by the Manitoulin-Sudbury Community Care Access Centre, as well as the VON, Sudbury branch.

Ms Martel: When it comes to community care access centres, if you don't get involved to protect seniors and services, who does? For goodness' sake. What a silly answer.

Minister, this woman got a letter in the mail saying her mom's homemaking services were going to be cut off as

of June 23, 2003. She was given a list of providers, VON included, and told she now must buy services from the VON and other local service providers. You know, Minister, that homemaking services allow seniors to stay in their homes as long as possible. It's much more cost-efficient for seniors to remain in their homes than it is for them to have to go into long-term-care facilities. Many seniors who need these services will not be able to afford to pay for them. So I ask you again, as the minister responsible for funding CCACs, what are you going to do to ensure that seniors in Sudbury and Manitoulin get the homemaking services they need without cost from the CCAC?

Hon Mr Newman: I say to you today, I'll put the record of our government with respect to home care up against the record of either the Liberals or the NDP any day. And I'll tell you this: our government has allocated almost \$1.7 billion toward home care and community care services in the year 2002-03, and nearly \$1.2 billion of that went to community care access centres for the very services the member talks about.

I can tell you that we have created a system in this province that does not have means testing for clients. There's no income testing. We also provide the broadest basket of services of all the provinces in Canada. I'm very proud of the home care record of this government.

MEMBER'S COMMENTS

Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Labour): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Earlier, I raised a point of order in the House during question period with respect to the member for St Paul's. I raised the point that he had, in essence, linked all of the ministers of the crown into a grand conspiracy. I ask for some assistance. Here's what the member stated:

"So my question is to you as a minister is—and it's not just with respect to OPG and Hydro One, but all government enterprise corporations not subject to freedom of information act requests—will the government release all expenses submitted through those corporations that involve a minister of the crown? Will you release—

"Interjections.

"Mr Bryant: All the ministers doth protest too much. You know very well that there are monies and expenses being funnelled through government enterprise corporations to avoid public disclosure. You know it."

Very clearly, Mr Speaker, he has made an allegation not just against me as a minister of the crown, but every minister of the crown in this place. Our families, our credibility is on the line. You need now, sir, to step in and state this is inappropriate.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I thank the member very much. I don't have copies. I also will say that Hansard will be available, and I'm sure the honourable member, if he has indeed said what is quoted, will, as always, rise in this House and withdraw it. Again, when we get into territories like this, I hope all members will be appropriate in what they say. I'm sure we'll get an

opportunity to review Hansard. I thank the minister for bringing it to our attention.

1510

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Timmins-James Bay has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Northern Development and Mines concerning the Ontario Northland Railway. This matter will be debated today at 6 pm.

VISITORS

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: On a happier note, I'm sure members would like to welcome to the members' gallery my constituency assistant from Whitby-Ajax, Kim Glover; our co-op student, Jamie Millage; and our summer students, Julia Silbak and Chris Mackay.

PETITIONS

HOME CARE

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas well-managed and adequately funded home health care is a growing need in our community; and

"Whereas the provincial government has frozen community care access centre budgets, which has meant dramatic cuts to service agency funding and services to vulnerable citizens, as well as shortened visits by front-line workers; and

"Whereas these dramatic cuts, combined with the increased complexity of care for those who do qualify for home care, has led to an impossible cost burden to home care agencies; and

"Whereas the wages and benefits received by home care workers employed by home care agencies are well below the wages and benefits of workers doing comparable jobs in institutional settings; and

"Whereas front-line staff are also required to subsidize the home care program in our community by being responsible for paying for their own gas and for vehicle maintenance; and

"Whereas other CCACs and CCAC-funded agencies across the province compensate their staff between 29 cents and 42.7 cents per kilometre; and

"Whereas CCAC-funded agency staff in our own community are paid 26 cents a kilometre, with driving time considered 'hours worked';

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

“To act now to increase funding to the CCAC of Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington in order for it to adequately fund service agencies so they can fairly compensate front-line workers.”

I will affix my signature to this petition because I am in full agreement.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The petition I have is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. I received it some time ago. It's not quite as timely as it might be, but the general content is.

“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 at least those in Saskatchewan in 1999; and

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

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

“Demand that Premier Eves reduce his 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.

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): I've got a petition that reads like this:

“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 Premier Eves reduce his 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 am going to give Timothy this, with my signature affixed, to give it to the desk. I am in full agreement with this.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): “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% over three years, or \$3.02 per diem in the first year and \$2 in the second year and \$2 in the third year, effective September 1, 2002;

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

“Whereas this increase is above the rent increase guidelines for tenants in the province of Ontario for 2002;

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

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

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

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

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

“Demand that Premier Eves reduce the 15% increase over three years in accommodation costs to no more than the cost-of-living increase annually and that the provincial government provide adequate funding for nursing and personal care to a level that is at least at the average standard for nursing and personal care in those 10 jurisdictions included in the government’s own study.”

I will affix my signature to this petition, because I am in full agreement.

1520

ALUMINUM SMELTER

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): This petition reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario,

“Regarding cleanup of the abandoned smelter site in Georgina:

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

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

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Ministry of the Environment to conduct a full environmental assessment of this site, followed by a cleanup of the full smelter site.”

I affix my name. I am in agreement with this petition.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): I have a petition that was sent to me, which I’d like to read to the House.

“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 Premier Eves reduce his 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 will give Sabrina this to take to the table. I endorse this in full agreement.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): By the way, I forgot to announce that you are the member for Scarborough-Rouge River.

Mr Curling: The great riding of Scarborough-Rouge River, Mr Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Absolutely.

HOME CARE

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas well-managed and adequately funded home health care is a growing need in our community; and

“Whereas the provincial government has frozen community care access centre budgets, which has meant dramatic cuts to service agency funding and services to vulnerable citizens, as well as shortened visits by front-line workers; and

“Whereas these dramatic cuts, combined with the increased complexity of care for those who do qualify for home care, has led to an impossible cost burden to home care agencies; and

“Whereas the wages and benefits received by home care workers employed by home care agencies are well below the wages and benefits of workers doing comparable jobs in institutional settings; and

“Whereas front-line staff are also required to subsidize the home care program in our community by being responsible for paying for their own gas and for vehicle maintenance; and

“Whereas other CCACs and CCAC-funded agencies across the province compensate their staff between 29 cents and 42.7 cents per kilometre; and

“Whereas CCAC-funded agency staff in our own community are paid 26 cents per kilometre, with driving time considered ‘hours worked’;

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

“To act now to increase funding to the CCAC of Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington in order for it to adequately fund service agencies so they can fairly compensate front-line workers.”

I will affix my signature to this petition, as I am in full agreement.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): These petitions are coming in by the hundreds. It reads like this:

“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,” as we know, “who should be able to live out their lives with dignity, respect and in comfort in this province;

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

“Demand that Premier Eves reduce his 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 will give Ryan this to take to the desk. I affix my signature here. There are thousands, and lots of petitions are coming in daily. I, of course, endorse this and know the concerns they have for this government.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO HOME PROPERTY
TAX RELIEF FOR SENIORS ACT, 2003

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 2, 2003, on the motion for second reading of Bill 43, An Act to provide Ontario home property tax relief for seniors / Projet de loi 43, Loi prévoyant un allègement de l’impôt foncier résidentiel pour les personnes âgées de l’Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Everybody will remember where we left off. The member for Timmins-James Bay had just finished his debate, so we’ll go into comments and questions in rotation, and I’m looking to my right. Comments and questions?

I’ll go in rotation. Questions and comments? The Chair recognizes the member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale.

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): As always, the member for Timmins-James Bay did an excellent job of making his presentation with passion on behalf of the constituents he represents. I think he went out of his way to highlight the fact that this piece of legislation that is currently before the House is—

Interjection.

Mr Smitherman: Yes, I don’t want more than two minutes. Two minutes would be plenty.

This issue that is before the House is one more demonstration on the part of the government that they are prepared to distribute the very limited funds of the province of Ontario in ways that address the needs of the wealthy at the expense of the needs of those who are not so wealthy.

My riding stands as an interesting example of a place where this disproportionate approach to public policy creates some pretty extraordinary circumstances. I’m an MPP who represents a riding that’s home to many of our country’s richest and too many of our country’s poorest. At a time when the government of Ontario has a \$2-billion debt—don’t ask me; ask the Dominion Bond Rating Service or Standard and Poor’s or the Toronto Dominion Bank—they find money for some of our society’s most affluent folks.

I have the honour of representing people who have done well, and their contribution is something that I support. But I think many of them would stand alongside me and say that, at a time when our public education system is starved of the kind of resources that produce the quality outcomes, that ensure the standard of life and living to which we’ve become accustomed, the precious resources of government shouldn’t be distributed in such a way as to provide this kind of extraordinary tax relief to people who frankly are doing just fine without it.

The member for Timmins-James Bay has a pretty good record of being able to speak out on those issues and, with a commitment to justice, to make that presentation. I’m very pleased to offer these comments in response to his excellent speech.

1530

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions? Questions and comments?

The member for Timmins-James Bay has two minutes to respond.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I’m standing.

The Deputy Speaker: I’m sorry. I have already gone past.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I’m sure the member from Hamilton was going to say some really

nice things about the presentation I made in regard to the seniors' tax credit.

I raised a number of issues, and I'm glad to see that members appreciated some of those comments.

Just to sum up, what I was trying to say was that when you look at this particular policy, you've really got to ask yourself where the government is coming from. If they wanted to put in place a policy that was truly there to assist seniors—and let's say all seniors; a generic or universal policy for seniors—they certainly would have found some way of being able to assist all of them in some sort of equal way.

What you've got now is, if you have a person who's a renter and happens to have a low income, who probably needs money more than a person who has a high income and owns a \$6-million mansion somewhere in Rosedale, you're going to have a really inadequate way of dealing with it, because the renter is probably going to get about 120 bucks a year by way of this rebate and somebody like Frank Stronach is going to get about \$27,000 on the rebate.

You say to yourself, "Well, the government has clearly chosen sides yet again." They've said, "We've got to pick between helping seniors who are on modest or low incomes and people like Frank Stronach," and other friends.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Conrad Black.

Mr Bisson: Conrad Black.

They've picked their friends and said, "We're clearly with Frank Stronach. We think Frank Stronach deserves yet another tax break. We think Frank Stronach should have more money in his pocket." This government says, "We don't like seniors who are on middle and low incomes, because we don't believe in universality when it comes to trying to assist them."

I'd probably have a little bit easier time trying to support this policy if the government truly tried to put together a universal policy that assists seniors or one that at least tries to assist those most in need. This is an inverted policy: rob from the poor and give to the rich, the story of this government.

The Deputy Speaker: In the members' gallery east I want to introduce Rita and Katrina Shaw, Natalie Prange, Lauren Schmultz and Daniel Wornl. They are visiting with page Brittany Shaw from Kitchener Centre. Welcome to our Legislature today.

Everybody will remember we're on Bill 43, and I'm looking for further debate.

Hon Carl DeFaria (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): I rise today to address second reading of Bill 43, the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, 2003.

My colleague the Minister of Finance introduced this bill on May 22. As minister responsible for seniors, I am proud of our government's commitment to seniors. I am proud that we are supporting their efforts to live safely and with dignity and independence for as long as possible.

This bill is an important part of that commitment. Bill 43 is consistent with our many initiatives to ensure the health and well-being of Ontario's 1.5 million seniors. It is consistent with our introduction last week of legislation to eliminate mandatory retirement.

Seniors should have the right to choose to work past the age of 65 if they wish. That was an historic piece of legislation, long overdue, that we responded to to ensure our seniors will be given the choice and the dignity to keep working if they so wish.

Bill 43, the bill we are debating today, is also consistent with our strategies to combat elder abuse and support new ways to address Alzheimer's disease. It is consistent with our \$1.2-billion, multi-year investment in long-term care here in Ontario. We want to ensure seniors can access the health services they need.

Seniors have contributed to the growth and prosperity of Ontario. They are our community leaders, workers, business people, mentors and taxpayers. Through Bill 43, our government is saying to seniors, "We value your contributions. We believe you should share in the prosperity you have helped to create." How fitting that we are debating this legislation in June, Seniors' Month. It is a good time to show our appreciation to seniors for helping to build this province.

Bill 43, the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, proposes to eliminate residential education property tax paid by seniors who rent or own their homes. It applies not only to seniors who own their homes, but also to seniors who are renting their homes. If passed, the act would provide \$450 million, almost half a billion dollars, in benefits for seniors in 2004. About 945,000, almost a million, senior households would each save an average of \$475 per year. If the House passes this legislation, it would go a long way to helping seniors afford to stay in their own homes.

Once passed, we would implement residential education property tax relief in two stages. The first stage would start July 1, 2003, less than a month from today, and go to the end of the year. Seniors would be reimbursed for the education property tax paid on their principal residence for that half of the year. Then for 2004, and each year after, seniors would get back the full amount of the annual residential education property tax they paid. This is a tax credit that senior homeowners and renters would have to apply for if the legislation passes. Applying for it would be optional, but we would encourage every eligible senior to take advantage of this tax relief. Pending the Legislature's approval, our government would process the first set of applications and send out the first set of payments to seniors by December 2003.

The proposed Ontario home property tax relief for seniors program has been designed to be simple. It recognizes that many seniors rely on fixed incomes that are being eaten up by rising property taxes. It aims to provide education property tax relief to all eligible seniors, regardless of their income.

There is considerable support for the residential education property tax relief among Ontario seniors. United

Senior Citizens of Ontario represents approximately 300,000 seniors and over 800 seniors' clubs throughout this province. Over the past years, United Senior Citizens of Ontario has passed resolutions at their annual conferences asking the government to take this step that we are taking at this time in this Legislature. Also, the Canadian Snowbird Association has endorsed this government action that helps and supports seniors.

These are two major seniors' organizations that really consult with their membership, the seniors of this great province of Ontario. I am pleased that through this bill we are addressing the call of so many seniors for relief from this part of their property tax.

1540

Seniors have worked all their lives and have paid taxes throughout their lives, and they still pay taxes and will continue to pay taxes. This is a small relief that our government has decided to provide our seniors. I can tell you that I have met with seniors across this province, and one of the main things I hear is that they live in their homes and don't want to abandon their homes to go to a small apartment, because they are familiar with their surroundings. Because of the fact that property taxes keep going up in their communities, they felt that being on fixed incomes, this is something the government owed them and should do for them.

I also want to point out that, if passed, this measure will not affect funding for Ontario's educational system. Because of the misinformation that the opposition has put out, many seniors believe that by applying for this tax credit, they would be taking money away from the education system. This fearmongering takes seniors on a guilt trip, and it's so unfair for the opposition to put out that information—

Hon David Turnbull (Associate Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation): But it's typical.

Hon Mr DeFaria: "It is typical," my colleague beside me says. It is typical of the opposition, with every measure the government takes for the well-being of Ontarians, to misinform people about what the measure means and where the funding will be coming from.

We applaud our seniors' concerns about their grandchildren's education. However, let me assure all concerned seniors, all Ontarians and all my colleagues here in this House that the proposed seniors' property tax relief will not diminish our government's commitment to public education in any way.

I ask my colleagues to think about this bill. I know they are opposing it on the other side; I know the opposition already has voted against this bill at first reading. I just ask that they keep informing people of the real facts about this bill. This bill will not be taking any funding from our children's education system. In fact, in the 2003 budget we announced a record \$15.3 billion in funding for the 2003-04 school year. This is the highest level of education funding in Ontario's history. It is an 18% increase since we took office in 1995. This funding promises a stable base for Ontario's schools over several years. We will continue to invest in education and im-

plement the recommendations of the Education Equality Task Force. Parents and grandparents can expect the education system to be focused where it needs to be: on improved student learning. Property tax relief is a practical way to help seniors secure their financial future and to help them remain in their own homes as long as possible.

I will briefly mention some of the other new and existing tax relief measures that benefit Ontario's seniors.

In the 2003 budget, our government announced that it would exempt life leases from the land transfer tax. More and more seniors are purchasing life leases for residences operated by charitable and non-profit groups. By introducing the land transfer tax exemption, we expect to provide an average saving of \$1,500 per unit.

The 2003 budget also proposed improving the tax credits used to support caregivers looking after elderly and dependent relatives. These improvements will be effective January 1, 2003. They will result in savings of about \$300 to caregivers and people with disabilities. Ontario's personal income tax credit for seniors on low to moderate income already provides them significant savings. Over \$500 million a year in savings and support go to Ontario's seniors and their families through personal income tax credits. I'm happy to say that when the proposed Ontario home property tax relief for seniors is added to other tax relief initiatives, Ontario's seniors would be saving \$2.5 billion in taxes per year.

Overall as a group, seniors are saving \$1.6 billion to date from Ontario tax cuts. That is a significant amount of savings for a significant part of our population, and a well-deserving group in our population.

As you see, Speaker, our government is serious about its vision of supporting Ontario's seniors. We are serious about helping them lead their lives with dignity and independence. We have been striving toward this vision since our government was first elected. We continue to aim for it as we plan for the needs of seniors now and in the future.

This is the right vision. This is the right thing to do. As I travel this province, as I speak to our seniors and veterans, I realize the contributions that they have made, and the wonderfully diverse province with some 200 different cultural communities speaking some 60 different languages living side by side, raising their families. Seniors from all different backgrounds built this province in a way that there is no place on earth better than this province of Ontario to live. The quality of life here is wonderful. The opportunities are here. I speak to people across this province. I know the opportunities that exist in Ontario. These opportunities would not be here if it were not for the seniors that helped build this great province.

As I mentioned before, June is Seniors' Month—a tradition we have celebrated in Ontario for more than 20 years. This year's theme is "Footsteps to Follow." That says it all. "Footsteps to Follow" recognizes that seniors are both teachers and role models for future generations.

Let me outline some of the other measures that, together with Bill 43, show our government's respect and

care for Ontario's seniors. We will provide \$10 million per year to give seniors better and faster access to cataract surgery. This investment will increase the number of non-hospital surgeries by 15,000 per year.

We will invest \$7 million per year to better prevent, manage and treat osteoporosis. This will benefit 530,000 Ontarians. I am sure my friend Mr Kormos will agree that this is good for Ontario's seniors and good for Ontario.

Our long-term-care investment plan is increasing annual long-term-care community services spending by \$551 million. This keeps Ontario as the leader in Canada in per capita spending on long-term-care community services.

Our 2003 budget announced an increase in spending on the Ontario drug benefit program, to a total of \$2.3 billion. A lot of our seniors call this program Ontario's crown jewel. The Ontario drug benefit program is unique, and the federal government does not help us with this program. This is an Ontario-made program. When you talk to people from the Snowbird Association, they'll tell you that people from other provinces such as British Columbia look at seniors in Ontario with a certain degree of jealousy of the quality that we provide not only to our seniors here but when they travel abroad. The plan provides access to about 3,200 prescription drugs.

Our government is also improving protection for vulnerable seniors. We have invested \$4.3 million in a strategy to combat elder abuse. This funding supports a partnership of my ministry with the Ministry of the Attorney General and the Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse. This elder abuse strategy has three priorities: to better coordinate community services; to train front-line staff from various sectors to deal with seniors; and to raise public awareness.

1550

We are moving well ahead with implementation of the elder abuse strategy. Eight regional coordinators plus a provincial coordinator and a training and education officer have been hired. They are out in communities across Ontario working with agencies in an effort to address the terrible problem of elder abuse. This is a worthy effort and a welcome effort, and we are proud of our role as a government in helping prevent elder abuse.

We also are taking steps to help protect seniors who live in retirement homes. We have provided \$1.2 million toward the crisis response and information service. The Ontario Residential Care Association, ORCA, operates this telephone service and it is available to all retirement home operators and residents and their families in Ontario. Telephone staff handle complaints and give information about service and accommodation options.

We have also launched a guide to programs and services for seniors in Ontario, on-line and in print. As I travel across the province, people praise us for this guide because it provides information not only about provincial services but also federal and local programs for seniors. We'll be translating this guide. We have it already translated into Chinese and we'll be translating it into

other languages as quickly as we can. This information helps seniors maintain their quality of life and participate in programs across the province.

We sponsor Ontario seniors' seminars on topics such as safe medication use, safe driving, avoiding frauds and scams, and advanced care planning. These seminars are developed, again, with our partners, the Ontario Pharmacists' Association, the Canadian Automobile Association and the Ontario Securities Commission. These seminars help Ontario seniors live healthier, more active and safer lives.

My caucus colleague will speak more on some of these issues. Our government brings a common message that Ontario seniors deserve all that we can provide. Seniors have worked hard all their lives to help bring this province to the point in our history where we have a strong economy and a vibrant society. I ask the members of this House to put partisanship aside and support this legislation. I ask the opposition to change their mind and support this legislation for our seniors.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): We will not change our minds, because we've got some information we want the seniors of Ontario to understand loudly and clearly. What a defensive position this government is now taking.

Welcome to the show: 115,000 of our senior citizens kicked off home care by this government last year alone; 115,000 people cannot get the help to stay in their homes because this government kicked them off by not providing CCACs with the funding to do that. Shame on you for that. A 15% increase in long-term-care residential co-payments for the residents—what a bunch of claptrap they're trying to sell the people of Ontario.

The people of Ontario know the game that you're playing. The children of the senior citizens in Ontario know the game that you're playing: \$4.49 a day for meals for our senior citizens in long-term-care facilities; co-payments for drugs. The math wizards who are playing over there—\$475 they're going to try to tell everybody they're going to get in their cheques. Why don't you tell us about Ted Rogers, who's going to get \$18,425 with this bill? Or how about Isabel Bassett, who's going to get over \$7,000 in this little tax scheme they've got going on?

I can't believe that this government is standing up and now professing from on high that it's going to take care of the senior citizens when 115,000 of our senior citizens have been kicked off home care in their very homes.

This government is standing up and saying that it's going to take care of and that it loves the senior citizens. Do you know why? It's in a defensive mode right now. It's defending itself so that it can stand up—and very few of those words are talking about this particular bill.

Shame on this government for treating our senior citizens like that. A 15% increase in copayments for our long-term-care residents—they will remember.

I will also tell you something else: \$4.49 a day for meals is not acceptable in this province, and I'll speak loud and clear about it.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have no idea what the member for Brant is talking about when he says that Isabel Bassett is going to get a \$7,000 kickback. That's just the guest house. You're not looking at the mansion. The mansion is going to get her a good \$15,000 or \$20,000 kickback from this government.

I like the minister. He's a nice person. I've met his kids. He has nice kids. They're bright kids. They're going to do very well—I hope. It's a good thing he's making a ministerial salary, because you have to make at least that much money if your kids are going to be able to go to college or university. You see, Minister, notwithstanding that I like you—and I do like you—and that you're paid a whole lot of money to make these speeches which are written for you—and they are—

Interjections.

Mr Kormos: Folks, please, I'm speaking with praise of a colleague for whom I have affection and whose kids I like.

I understand why he reads this stuff: because he's paid a whole lot of money to do it. He needs that money because he has three kids now in college and university, so he has no choice but to read the kind of speeches you just heard. It's not to imply that he necessarily believes it, but he has to read it, because that's what he's paid the money to do. He needs the cheese, the fromage, the dough, because he has three kids in college and university.

The problem is that there are a whole lot of senior citizens out there whose grandkids, to their great shame and regret, will never get into college and university because their dads don't make the kind of money Mr DeFaria does. Mr DeFaria is in the top 2% of income earners in the province. There are a whole lot of grandparents out there who are worried that their grandkids won't be able to go to college and university like Mr DeFaria's because their dads don't make the big bucks Mr DeFaria does.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's indeed my pleasure to respond to the member from Mississauga East, who is also the Minister of Citizenship as well as the minister responsible for seniors. I know the passion he brings to this topic. That's why he's here on Thursday afternoon relentlessly listening to seniors and the voice of seniors. I'm here to support him because I am, arguably, one of those seniors, moving forward.

Bill 43 does a lot of things, and I'll tell you one of the things it does. People listening might appreciate this. The province of Ontario sets the education portion of the residential property tax, and the rate they set is uniform across the province. It's 0.335 cents on the assessment. That's about \$335 on a home of \$100,000, and you can do the numbers if your home is worth more than that.

What it's saying is that people whose assessment has risen—and it's my understanding that the assessment has risen, on average, about 10% to 15%—it's giving them some relief, because, for the most part, seniors are on fixed incomes.

I understand fully that the Liberals have voted against every single measure of tax relief for seniors. I expect

that they will increase taxes. In fact, there was an extremely good article this morning that I'd recommend viewers should read, and that is in the National Post—I'll send you a copy if you contact my constituency office—called, "Mr McGuinty's \$4.6B Solution." Read the article, and you'll know the Liberals will tax you to death.

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): I wasn't going to really comment on the minister's statement here, but I was moved by the fact that my colleague from the New Democratic Party stated the passion that he brought to this issue—no doubt at all; I saw the passion. I saw that he really believed that it's seniors who are the founding fathers, with all their contributions as role models of this province. I commend him for that.

1600

I also understand, as the member of the New Democratic Party Mr Kormos stated, that, sure, he's well paid to carry that message. If he could have carried that same passion this morning, when the Dudley George Ipperwash issue was brought forward, I would have said to myself, "That's genuine. It's consistent." But what happened? The same individuals, those people who need the support of the minister in the sense of human rights issues—it wasn't there. I wonder where the passion went. What window did that slip through?

We know that the seniors need support; of course they need that. My colleague spoke earlier about the support they need and the attack this government has made on seniors to date. They come in now and say, "Here we are. We're going to contribute some sort of fund to you. All is well."

I'm looking forward to making my contribution later on, at my time, when I will speak. I just hope to carry some consistency in this minister and I just hope, when it comes to other human rights issues like the seniors and the passion he puts in there, that he puts the same passion in what we would have done in regard to the Ipperwash case we heard today, and some of those human rights cases that have been neglected by this minister. We hope that you carry that passion and we wish you well in your endeavours.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Hon Frank Klees (Minister of Transportation): I am pleased to respond as well to the remarks made by my good friend the Minister of Citizenship. As part of that portfolio, I know the responsibility he has for seniors in this province is one he feels particularly honoured to shoulder, and he does so extremely well. He does so by having in the best interest the quality of life for seniors in this province.

What is so disappointing is when I hear the response of opposition members to this issue. The fact of the matter is the issue—

Mr Kormos: What's going on here? He's out of order. He's breaking the rules.

Hon Mr Klees: Excuse me, Speaker. You might want to speak to the member here.

The Deputy Speaker: My apologies. I made a terrible mistake. You were the fifth person to speak to this, so

I'm going to cut you off now. I realize I made a mistake. I'll give you an opportunity to finish in a few minutes.

In the meantime, I'm going to call on the Minister of Citizenship and minister responsible for seniors for his two-minute response.

Hon Mr DeFaria: I thank the members who have participated in the debate. But I'm surprised that the people on the other side really have not got it. I would like the opposition, the Liberals, to go and explain to a senior who is on a fixed income why it they are voting against that senior being able to get, on average, a \$475 tax rebate to be able to stay in their homes instead of having to move out. I would like them to go and explain to the seniors the real facts about this legislation, that 99% of seniors receiving this tax credit are people who need this help. They are people on fixed incomes. They are people who need this support.

They are not giving information that is correct—*not* like my colleague the member for Durham, who spoke very well, and of course my colleague the Minister of Transportation, who made some brief but excellent remarks.

All I ask of the opposition is to go and talk to the seniors in their neighbourhoods, to explain to them why they are voting; I understand they have indicated that they will revoke this tax credit for seniors. When they go door to door, I would like them to explain that to their seniors.

What the government is doing is responding to seniors who are on fixed incomes and, like I said, this legislation does exactly that. It is a small recognition of the fact that seniors in this province have worked all their lives, paid taxes and continue to pay taxes. So if they get a small break, I don't know why the opposition would not be supporting it.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Curling: I want to say it's a great opportunity to speak on this timely topic. This bill before us should be looked at in two ways. When this came up, I first said, "They're moving in the right direction," but the fact is, when I looked a little deeper, I realized what is happening here. As I said, we must look at it in two ways. On one hand, this government says it wants to help seniors and you heard how articulately he put that forward: "We want to really help the seniors of this province." Of course, they do deserve a tax break, which is everything to this government here. As soon as an issue comes about, give them a tax break. It's rampant down in the States now. A tax break will solve everything now. Of course, they will ignore other things.

On the other hand, I can't help but think there's something rather political about this bill. Its content and its context is cleverly linked with some sort of political agenda here. In general, we believe that seniors in Ontario deserve respect, deserve assistance for their long-term care. But they also deserve restitution, and I use the word "restitution" deliberately here, because let's look at what this government has done to its seniors and the environment they've lived in over the time they've been

around. Isn't this the same government that you will recall levied a \$2 tax, a fee on prescription drugs? Isn't this the same government that at that time was attacking seniors and saying they are the ones—not only seniors; anyone who wants a prescription drug has to pay \$2. I think the minister forgot that.

That was harsh. As we get older—Mr Speaker, you are far from being old, but I know that dependence on prescription drugs may be a way of life afterwards, and then your income is reduced. Many of the seniors out there don't have the kind of income you have. But they were forced. That government forced on to the seniors a \$2 prescription fee. That was pathetic.

Over 60,000 senior citizens and vulnerable people reside in more than 525 long-term-care facilities in Ontario. I want to say it again: 60,000 senior citizens, people who are quite vulnerable, reside in 525 long-term-care facilities. Statistics Canada predicts the number of individuals over 65 years of age will double in the next 50 years. Of course, I won't be around at that time, but the fact is we will be doubling that amount. Residents today are admitted at an older age with more complex needs. As I said, dependence on prescription drugs and on help is needed more as we get arthritis and get into difficult times of life.

Yet this government's record on seniors is pretty dim and disastrous. This is the government that reduced home care, forcing at least 115,000 frail and elderly out of their homes and into institutional care. This is the same government that comes in here so compassionate now, saying they're going to offer \$400 a year from their educational tax break, a government which forced them into institutional care. This is the same government that hiked nursing home fees by 15%. You'll recall I said that the income of those seniors does not increase as they get older. As a matter of fact, the cost of living erodes some of the disposable income they have. This government went ahead and increased the fees in those homes by 15%. Keep in mind, in the balance, that this government is now saying, "We're going to give you a break." In the meantime, over eight years they have been taking away, levying taxes on seniors. When it comes time for an election, they say, "We've got a plan. We're going to give you back \$400."

1610

I'm talking about the vulnerable people, not the high-income individuals who are making \$200,000 or who have big homes and are able to get a break on that. They would say to themselves, "We don't really need that kind of money." But if the government gives it to them, they will take it. Those people are not complaining. But those who are in need are saying, "They're going to give us back \$475 on average." That \$475 will not even replace the amount of money in the attack they have done to seniors in the past.

This is the same government that removed standards that made sure all nursing home residents received at least 2.25 hours—two and a quarter hours—of nursing care daily and three baths a week. Three baths a week—

that's what they were reduced to. Helpless, struggling seniors were reduced to that level, and this government today comes in and says, "We'll give you back your education tax," after they've reduced them and humiliated them.

They talk about how this will bring respect and dignity to our seniors. Is that the kind of dignity the minister talks about? Is it dignity that they can only have three baths a week? We're going to bring dignity back to the seniors by reducing their baths per week and increasing the cost for them in institutional homes by 15%? That's dignity. That's bringing dignity, all right.

You ask me and many of us to explain to the people outside that they are going to get \$475 and we're going to deny them. They've got a majority and they'll put this through anyhow. But I will explain to them that they took away their dignity and gave them \$475. Which would I want back? My dignity. You deprive me of some of the funds I am making by increasing the fees in those homes by 15% and reducing my baths. "Give me back my dignity and keep your money," is what I would say to them, and what many of them would say, because that's disgusting. We're speaking about the same people who helped build this nation, who helped make this a better place for all of us. And today this government has reduced them to that level.

This is a government that has neglected those people. They have allowed nursing homes to operate without licences or regular inspections, as reported by the Provincial Auditor. Is that the dignity you brought? You give back \$475 but put them in homes that are not even inspected, and say, "I must explain it to them at the door."

I will. I will tell them, "That's the government that took your dignity and wants to give you \$400." But I will not waste my time telling those who are getting the \$12,000 back, because they can look after themselves. I'll explain to those people whose doors I'll be knocking on: "They took away your dignity, and they want to give you \$475," and they're basically doing a wonderful thing.

So the passion these ministers speak about is misguided and confused, and somehow they have a lapse in their memory of what they have done to the seniors of this province. And then they said, "We think we have something kind of cute here. We think people will take it. Once we give them money, they'll forget what happened to them." They won't forget. These are people who are intelligent, people who have been through the trenches and people who have fought and made us who we are today. They would say, "Why are they treating us like that? Why today? Why, at the last moment, are they bringing out a bill that would say to us, 'We will give you some money?'" It's because they're insulting those individuals and saying they will forget. Of course they will take that money, because the money is deserving of them. They've taken away more than ever from them.

The government says it is putting \$200 million into long-term care this year. The reality is, they're only putting in \$160 million for capital funding and \$30 mil-

lion for operating. So that dance with lovely figures that they're showing out there, how much is going to get into the hands of those individuals to improve the dignity that you took away from them? Residents are putting in \$130 million, and the government is only putting in \$38 million to deal with the shortage of nursing staff in personal care. So you see, it is the people who are putting it back, not the government. Furthermore, this wonderful feeling that they have in giving back the people their own money is like they're doing them one of the greatest favours in the world. But they didn't talk about taking away their dignity when they were taxing them higher, or when they increased more user fees than any other government we've seen. So while they're talking about reducing taxes, they're socking it to those who are most vulnerable in society.

Why is that today that we have more homeless people while they brag about the economy? There are more homeless people sleeping on the roads under this government. A sad affair. They come and say how proud they are of bringing back dignity. Talk to those people in the streets and the seniors. The next time you're passing, Minister, just stoop down and say, "Aren't you happy that I brought you some dignity now?" Talk to those from whom you took away some of their support in welfare subsidies, who try to cope at the lower level of income, and say, "We've taken away your money but we're giving you back dignity." They couldn't pay their rent. They've had to cut out some of their food. Bringing back dignity.

This last time now, they're coming in this late hour of the evening, the late hour of their reign. They say, "We're going to give you \$475 to recoup all of that insult and abuse that we have laid on you." Remember the Common Sense Revolution? It was a revolution indeed. It really attacked the poor and the most vulnerable in our society. People will not forget that. They won't, because the fact is, while they were struggling to get ahead, there were ministers here who were insulting them daily. Some think they can just go and get dented tuna cans. Some were throwing syringes on their desk and demonstrating the fact that that's what the poor are all about. These are ministers. These are people who are being paid by the taxpayers. Those same people whom they were insulting were paying their salaries.

Bringing back dignity? They're going to bring back dignity to our seniors. They're going to bring back dignity because thousands of people have written daily to us. They talk about that, despite the recent increase, studies have revealed that Ontario still funds the lowest level of long-term care of any of the 11 other jurisdictions in the government-funded level of services. It's funny how their statistics find them praising one aspect, yet the people themselves are talking about how they have lost dignity and money under this. They've increased the fees for them to exist. On average, the government last year contributed \$7 to accommodation costs—the fact is they are about \$7.02 by the residents versus approximately \$2 by the government.

1620

In addition, in the areas of physiotherapy and audiology delisting, this government removed physiotherapy and audiology services from OHIP. This was a direct hit on the seniors. Bringing back dignity? You removed those services they need. They can maybe find other sources instead.

It is seniors who most often have broken bones, heart attacks and strokes. It is seniors who need regular hearing tests because their hearing is going, or sometimes gone. In the areas of long-term and community care, this government commissioned a study of long-term-care services in 11 jurisdictions. As I said, Ontario came last in this. Bringing back dignity? That's a lot of effort you over there have made. You've worked so hard over the eight years or nine years that we're running last in this thing.

We provide an average of a little over two hours of service per patient per day—2.4 hours of service per patient per day. The Tories have eliminated standard minimum hours of nursing care and baths per week, as I've mentioned before. They only get three baths. Bringing back dignity? I go crazy sometimes if I ever miss a bath. I can't imagine the seniors not getting this. And this government brought back dignity?

So this bill must be looked at it against the background I have just articulated.

After hurting seniors over many years, they now want to come and say, "Here is a little nugget you can go along with. You seniors, I also presume your minds are going, so you will forget." They won't forget. These are people who will not forget.

This is politics. This is not policy. This is cynical. It's not smart. We know who will benefit from all this. We know who will benefit: those who have the large homes, those who have the large incomes. They will benefit. But those whom this government has beaten up over the years, has reduced to many ways of trying to survive, will feel that they will be blessed by \$475 or so. The time has come when people will look at this Conservative Party, the Ernie Eves government, the Harris-Eves government, because this attack started way back and they're putting a clinch on it right now.

The Liberal Party under Dalton McGuinty will have some respect and will understand the abuse. We will roll back some of those abusive policies you've put in place. Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals are committed to bringing dignity, to returning dignity to our seniors, to making sure the services and the good work that brought us here today are maintained.

It is a sad day to see a rich province like this—I say rich province, but this government that says it is fiscally responsible has increased the debt over their time here and have more homeless on the streets, have seniors having fewer baths, have seniors having to pay more in institutional homes. They will find that this is not the government for them, that this is not the compassionate and dignity-returning government they talk about. This is not it. Because on that day, and thanks to democracy,

which they would have changed if they could have, when the election comes, the people have a choice.

I say to the minister and the members over there, when I get to the door, I can fully explain why we would vote against this, because this is a very cynical piece of policy that they brought in and are playing politics with. I have no way of feeling regret about that and bringing back real dignity to the seniors of this province.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Bisson: To my good friend from Scarborough-Rouge River, I notice he's always on the floor. He's in the top two or three people who get a chance to speak around here. That's very good. I'm glad to see that he is as active here as I am, because I think it's important to participate in this place. I commend the member from Scarborough-Rouge River for his comments. I thought what he was saying was sort of the basis of what we're seeing as overall policy of the Conservative government.

It's simple. This government has choices to make. Over the last eight years they've constantly made choices that clearly showed whose side they're on. If you look at this legislation they say, "We have a choice of helping hard-working individuals who end up retiring and becoming seniors on pensions, low-income or middle-income pensioners, and providing them with much-needed assistance in their daily lives, or we can give the bulk of the money to those people who have lots of money." For example, the choice is between giving Frank Stronach and Conrad Black \$20,000 or \$30,000 in tax breaks on the education portion on their property tax or they can help seniors.

This government says, "We've chosen. We're clearly on the side of Frank Stronach and Conrad Black," Because Conservatives understand that those poor rich people need so much help. They need another tax break so they can afford to maybe have another trip on the yacht somewhere in the Mediterranean this winter. Maybe some of them were on the last flight of the Concorde as it landed in Paris. We know they're hard done by, and they need so much help in order to keep up that rich lifestyle.

New Democrats choose differently. We would have chosen to help those people who need the help the most. For that reason we won't support this legislation.

Hon Tina R. Molinari (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I'm pleased to be able to join in this debate today. In response to the comments made by the member from Scarborough-Rouge River, I'm pleased to hear that he says Dalton McGuinty's Liberals are committed to bringing dignity. If that's the case, then I would assume that they would support this bill that gives seniors a tax break for the education portion of the taxes that they've been paying over so many years.

In the city of Vaughan we have a Vaughan council which, for some time, has been discussing the amount of money that seniors pay for taxes. At a recent council meeting in 1998, some of the councillors were expressing the need to help seniors with their tax bills. A Toronto

Star article, dated September 1, 1998, reported, "Councillors stressed their concern for the seniors facing tax increases." One of the councillors even said, "We'd better do something about this, or we are going to have huge tax increases for our senior citizens." Do you know which Vaughan councillor said that? It was Mario Racco, who is now the Liberal candidate in Thornhill.

Interjections.

Hon Mrs Molinari: Yes, that's true. In 1998, they felt that seniors were overtaxed. I know that they will be supporting this, because that's inconsistent if they wouldn't support it.

The seniors in the Thornhill community have contributed greatly. The seniors in this province have contributed greatly. On Mother's Day, I had the opportunity to visit a number of the seniors' residences in my riding, bringing potted flowers. They told me how much they appreciate a government that recognizes seniors in the province of Ontario. I'm pleased to say that we are that government.

1630

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I'm glad that the member from Thornhill mentioned the esteemed councillor from Vaughan, Mario Racco. He's probably the hardest-working councillor in Vaughan, and there are a lot of hard-working councillors there. Mario Racco is known as a people's councillor, a people's representative, who goes out of his way to help people. That's why I'm glad the member from Thornhill mentioned his name here. Mario Racco: remember that name. He'll probably be sitting in her seat pretty soon.

Anyway, I just want to remind the Conservatives on this side that what seniors are telling me is, "We don't trust this guy Ernie Eves. We don't trust him and we don't trust those Conservatives, because they promised us all these things. And what have we got?" Well, 105,000 seniors were cut off home care. That's what they got from the Conservatives. Hydro—you know, it's laughable what they're doing. Now they're running the hydro system on portable generators all over the province. And the bills seniors are paying—they say, "You're going to cut my taxes? Yeah, but look at the hydro bill I'm getting." Every month the hydro bill is going up a hundred bucks. Seniors say they can't turn on the lights, never mind the stove.

Then car insurance: this government's in charge of car insurance. Seniors' car insurance—Mr McKeagan on Roselawn Avenue in my ward, his car insurance has doubled. People can't get house insurance. One senior phoned me and said, "I can't get house insurance because they said I've got to take out the oil tank." Another senior phoned and said, "They say I've got to change the wiring in my house. I've lived in the house for 40 years," and now these insurance companies and the government sit by doing nothing as insurance rates are doubling.

So you're promising all these things on the eve of an election, desperately trying to buy votes with their own money. Seniors don't trust you, Conservatives. They don't trust Ernie Eves. They trust Mario Racco more than they trust you.

Interjections.

Mr Kormos: How am I to compete with this incredible heckling, Speaker? It puts me under pressure that I'm not accustomed to, but I'm trying to adapt.

Look, here we are. It's 4:30. I'm going to get to speak eventually. It's probably not going to be until around 5:30 that I'm going to be able to speak to this. It's going to be an hour. So I don't know, folks. I just took a look at the Toronto Star TV listings. Next is going to be a Conservative speaker, so you might as well watch Dr Phil or Oprah or whatever it is on another channel, and then it's a Liberal again, so you decide. But I'll be on around 5:30. I've got some things to say about seniors. I've got a whole lot to say about seniors, because I've got a whole lot of seniors down where I come from who aren't comforted at all by this and similar legislation coming from this government.

Why, just today Shelley Martel, the member from Nickel Belt, revealed that in her community—and other communities will follow—they've eliminated home-making services for seniors. They didn't reduce it; they eliminated it. Those are the sorts of things seniors need, our folks need, our grandparents need if they're going to be allowed to live out their senior years, their retirement years. This government wants to take away seniors' retirement years. This government goes to a nursing home—a nursing home—and tells those old folks, "Get out there and get to work." Lord, going to a nursing home and telling those folks to get out there and go to work. "Carry your own weight," that's what this government says to seniors. Seniors deserve far better than what you're giving them. They'll get it after the next election.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Scarborough-Rouge River has two minutes to reply.

Mr Curling: I really want to thank the members who participated and made comments, and some who strayed a bit on this. But let me tell you what the Liberals and Dalton McGuinty will do. First, we'll bring better home care so that seniors can remain independent in their homes and stay there longer. We'll roll back the Harris-Eves 15% nursing home fee hike to no more than the annual cost of living. This includes, of course, repaying seniors for the last year's increase. We will reinstate standards and properly inspected nursing homes. We'll also invest in more personal care for seniors who live in nursing homes.

It needs to be emphasized what we're talking about, as in some of the petitions that were done here. Ontario residents still get 45 minutes' less care daily than residents in Saskatchewan got in 1999; nine out of 10 require help to get dressed and to eat; eight out of 10 require help to move around; and six out of 10 suffer from dementia and related disorders. They need help.

We will invest in seniors' centres that provide social, recreational, educational and volunteer opportunities. That is about bringing dignity. I hope that as these members reassess themselves, those who wrote that policy will look at it and realize they're in the wrong place and say, "Why don't we support that?" We know

this government will push this thing through anyhow and it will pass. But this will never—it does not—address the kind of disservice and the disrespect you have done to seniors over the years unless you can change your ways. I don't think you will, not the ways, unless we change this government. Then we'll have respect and dignity for seniors.

Mr Kormos: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Is there a quorum?

The Deputy Speaker: Would you check and see if there is a quorum present?

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Further debate?

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): It is indeed a pleasure for me to—

Hon Doug Galt (Minister without Portfolio): Would you welcome Peter Kormos back to the House?

Mr Gill: Yes, I will welcome Mr Peter Kormos back into the House.

It's a great pleasure to rise today to speak about our government's commitment to supporting seniors in Bill 43, the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, 2003.

Members opposite might say that members of the government, or perhaps myself as the speaker, are in a conflict of interest. They might say that. They might say that I'm doing these things because my parents as seniors, their neighbours as seniors, their neighbours as seniors and people all over Ontario will benefit from this great piece of legislation. Of course they will ask why we're trying to help seniors. We are trying to help seniors because seniors have contributed so much that we can never repay them.

I was very pleased when this announcement was made in my riding, when Premier Ernie Eves was there in the great riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale with my constituents Frank and Olive Russell. In the release of this policy, one of the reporters happened to ask Premier Eves, and happened to ask Frank Russell, how he feels about getting this rebate; doesn't he feel for the kids? One of the answers—before Frank could even speak, Olive, his dear wife, said that she feels seniors have made great contributions, and she's so right. Seniors have made great contributions to make sure Ontario is flourishing and the economy is booming.

1640

The Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act proposes to complete our government's commitment to reduce residential education property taxes through tax relief provided to our seniors across the province. This bill would enable eligible seniors to receive a refund of the residential education portion of the property tax they currently pay on their principal residence.

Let's be clear: providing seniors with this tax relief does not take money away from the public education

system, despite the fearmongering by the members opposite—and I'm not going to distinguish any of the them, because they're all the same, be they Liberals or NDP. They keep fearmongering that this tax is going to take money away from the education system. They're totally—if I can use the right word—incorrect.

I want to assure the House and the people at home that this government remains committed to ensuring adequate funding for our schools. Under the new funding system for public education, which has been in place since 1998, funding to school boards is based on student enrolment, not property taxes. Property taxes themselves have nothing to do with school funding. It has everything to do with how many kids are in the school, and based on that, the funding formula works.

In fact, we have made it even better. After Dr Rozanski's report, we have given an additional \$2 billion to our school system. I was very pleased the other day to be at the Peel Board of Education—the public school system as well as the Catholic school system—announcing one of the largest funding they've ever had: \$950 million to the public school board and \$650 to the Catholic school board, which is historical funding of \$1.5 billion, a substantial increase. It has nothing to do with the inflationary increase from year to year. This is a substantial increase over previous years.

It's important to keep in mind that this government, our government, Ernie Eves's government, has increased funding for education from \$12.9 billion in 1995 to \$15.3 billion in the 2003-04 school year. This amount is expected to increase to \$16.2 billion for the 2005-06 school year. As you will appreciate, this amount is much more than many of the other provinces' total budgets put together—many of the Atlantic provinces.

This is an increase in funding even though enrolment, as you know, is projected to decline. In addition, it represents more education spending than under any other government in the history of Ontario.

The other day, I had a healthy debate, I suppose, with one of the great teachers. The discussion got into class size. What is the ideal class size? Somebody thinks 1:1 is the ideal class size. I know that when I went to high school, and I'm very proud of that high school, Parkdale Collegiate, about 35 years ago, I think we had a class size of 30 or more.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): Twenty-five years ago.

Mr Gill: Twenty-five years ago. You're right; I stand corrected. Thank you. Thirty or 35 students per class. It didn't do me any harm. I know that sometimes people say less is better. I'm not advocating larger class sizes; don't get me wrong. But there's no study that shows what the best class size is. We can have a debate on its own about how large class size should be. But I do recall, early in my studies at university—I think it was at Convocation Hall, because they couldn't find a room big enough—close to 2,000 students in one class. It didn't do me any harm.

Just as we have enhanced our commitment to education, I would like to turn the attention of this House once

again to our government's commitment to seniors. The 1.5 million seniors who live in this province have contributed enormously to our economic prosperity. Seniors have helped create an Ontario we can all be proud of. This government has worked hard to make Ontario the best place to live, work, invest, raise our families and then retire.

What we have accomplished is the direct result of this government's economic plan for prosperity. Our economic plan includes lower taxes. I think there is nothing wrong in saying that. I know that, in some of the parties' philosophy and mandate, "profit" is a bad word, but we have nothing against that. We think everybody should be able to work hard, flourish, make good money, pay fair taxes—not too many taxes—and make sure that a break is given to the people who deserve a break.

Our economic plan includes lower taxes, balanced budgets, reduced debt and prudent fiscal management. It is a plan that has created more than one million net new jobs since 1995. When we brought out our platform in 1994, people across the province, the pundits, the political scientists and even the so-called forensic accountants thought our numbers didn't add up, thought this did not make any sense. "How can you reduce taxes, create more jobs, have more money coming into government coffers, spend more money on health care and spend more money on education?" But we have proven that the system indeed works. Lower taxes create more jobs. We bring in more money. We can give more tax breaks.

I say it's a great cycle, and I'm very happy to say that the current election document, *The Road Ahead*, builds on those principles, recommits our belief, our commitment to Ontario taxpayers that will continue on that very successful path of cutting taxes and spending more money on important areas like health care, education, seniors, more police, like having no teacher strikes from now on, hopefully.

The key to economic growth and an enhanced quality of life for seniors is prosperous, healthy and secure cities, towns and rural communities. In fact, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has increased health care spending from \$17.6 billion in 1995 to \$27.6 billion this year. What I can't understand is when the opposition fearmonger and say we have cut health care spending. I don't know where their math is, but I don't see, when you increase spending from \$17.6 billion to \$27.6 billion, where the cuts are. I don't see that.

But I am very proud to say that there is going to be a brand new hospital, the largest community-based hospital in Canada, coming to my great riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, 608 beds with all the specialties, which will attract a lot of research and a lot of new doctors. I'm looking forward, perhaps within the next year and a half, to being able to be at the opening. I would certainly invite you, Mr Speaker, to be at the opening for the ribbon-cutting. As we again form the next government, I'm sure people will be very happy that we are there to celebrate the progress and fulfilling our promises.

That hospital, which benefits not only seniors but everybody, has been a long time coming. People have seen the hospital location or the board, if you want to say, for the last 30 years. I will take as much credit as anybody that on my watch we have fulfilled that dream, I'm very pleased to say.

At the same time, there are two long-term-care facilities coming up in my riding. My riding is also divided into a couple of distinct communities: the community of Malton, which comes under the city of Mississauga, and the community of Bramalea, which comes under the municipality of Brampton. So we have a long-term-care facility in Malton and we have a long-term-care facility in Brampton.

1650

The other day, a member from the NDP said in a committee hearing, "We have too many long-term-care beds." I did not think I would be here the day when people say we have too many long-term-care beds. I'm so pleased to say that we have an adequate number of beds.

We need to do more. We need to work on homelessness, people who are on the streets, when they need help. The irony of the situation is that the shelters go empty while people sleep on the streets. When the task forces and teams see fit, that there is danger to these people's lives or health, we should be able to look after them and give them shelter.

We will provide about \$400 million to fund 20,000 new long-term-care beds all across Ontario. Some more examples of our investment in long-term-care facilities include the creation of 186 new and 184 developed long-term-care beds at the F.J. Davey facility in the beautiful town of Sault Ste Marie—you take a train from Sault Ste Marie to the Agawa Canyon, and it's beautiful; I encourage people to take advantage of that because it's great for tourism for that part of Ontario and it's a great trip—160 new long-term-care beds in Kingsville, 200 new long-term-care beds at the Yee Hong Centre in Markham.

Many members would have heard me talk last week about the Yee Hong Centre and the great golf tournament that we were going to host on May 30. I'm proud to say that the gods were kind to us and made sure that the weather was good, and we had a great tournament. We were able to raise slightly more than \$10,000 for the Yee Hong Centre long-term-care beds. So the cheque was presented to Dr Joseph Wong that very evening. They were quite thankful. What better way to have some fun than getting some friends together, getting sponsorships from corporations that are benefitting so much from our policies, and creating those funds for the good cause of long-term-care beds? That's precisely the subject of our discussion today: the facilities that are so much needed for the seniors and recognizing the efforts that the seniors have already made for this great society of ours.

We've also increased the number of MRIs in Ontario from 12 to 42, and we have approved another 10. We have established 16 regional and district stroke centres

since 2000, reduced the waiting time for cardiac surgery by 50% since 1996 and have undertaken more initiatives to protect the health and well-being of our seniors. We have addressed and provided increased support to assist seniors affected by eye disease, osteoporosis and dementia, common illnesses affecting seniors. We will increase spending for the Ontario drug program by \$2.3 billion, an increase of 132% since 1994-95.

The Ministry of Citizenship and the Ministry of the Attorney General have worked together with seniors' groups and other stakeholders to implement Canada's first provincial strategy to combat elder abuse. The Attorney General has committed \$4.3 million over five years for a victim's justice fund starting in 2002-03. Our elder abuse strategy will ensure that seniors can live with dignity, are treated with respect and are protected from abuse. The strategy focuses on three priorities: coordination of local services, training of front-line staff from various professions and public education to raise awareness of elder abuse.

There are other initiatives currently in place for Ontario seniors. Ontario's strategy for Alzheimer's disease and related dementias has a \$68.4-million, 10-point action plan to help meet the needs of Ontarians with Alzheimer's disease, their caregivers and their families. This strategy involves training for front-line staff and physicians, increasing public awareness and annual design conferences to explore innovative and secure environments for people with Alzheimer's disease.

The Alzheimer's disease action plan also provides for the expansion of respite care, services for caregivers, research on caregiver needs, promotes advance care planning, new psychogenic staff, coordinates specialized diagnoses and supports local dementia networks. The establishment of a research coalition and an inter-generational volunteer initiative is also taking place.

About \$1.2 million is being provided to the Ontario Residential Care Association to operate its complaints, response and information service, CRIS, for all retirement homes across Ontario. This service includes full-time staff to help seniors and their families resolve retirement home complaints and give seniors information about the full range of services and accommodation options.

We also offer Ontario senior seminars. These seminars were developed in partnership between the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat and organizations such as the Ontario Pharmacists' Association, the Canadian Automobile Association and the Ontario Securities Commission. These seminars specialize in the areas of safe medication use, safe driving, avoiding financial scams and advance care planning.

The Memory Project is a multi-year initiative of the Dominion Institute to connect veterans and students in classrooms across Ontario. Print and on-line resources are available for Ontario teachers and students to support veterans' classroom visits to tell their war experiences. I was quite pleased to host a television show, and one of the very senior veterans was there. We spoke to the kids

about these veterans' experiences and how proud we are of their contribution.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Colle: The member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale failed to mention that there are over 65,000 people in the city of Toronto, most of them seniors, waiting for affordable housing that this government hasn't done anything about; 65,000 people waiting to live in decent accommodation that governments in Ontario, going back to Bill Davis, used to provide for seniors. I'm talking about the Metro Toronto Housing Co, fine buildings to live in with respect. They aren't built any more, therefore we've got seniors living a few inches away from being homeless.

What's their answer? He's proudly talking about the scoop law for the homeless. They're going to bring out a task force of who knows what to basically punish people who may be mentally ill, people who through no fault of their own are homeless. They're going to scoop them off their streets and do what with these poor people? Their answer is—I think it was Jim Flaherty who was saying, "We're going to be tough on the homeless people." Maybe you should provide some support, some housing for them so they don't become homeless.

They say, "We're going to give you all this money." The last eight years—seniors in Ontario all tell me they're worse off. They're paying more for hydro, more to heat their home. They're even paying for their medicine—they never paid for their medicine before—through user fees.

Hospitals: this government proudly boasts of it. Duncan Sinclair: do you remember him? He closed 30 hospitals. I've got two hospitals closed in my riding of Eglinton-Lawrence. They closed Branson and North-western emergencies. Seniors are saying, "What am I getting for my money? This government has closed hospitals, closed emergencies, no housing. Good for me? Good for them."

1700

Mr Bisson: I want to question the member, Mr Gill. I want to know where he stands on seniors who are driving in the cab industry. I got this invitation. It says, "On Tuesday, June 10, 2003, at 11 am, the taxi industry will be protesting the unfair treatment it has been getting from all levels of government. Mr Raminder Gill"—and I don't believe this—"has lied about the real purpose of Bill 2." They're coming over here to protest. I just want to know how he feels about the seniors who are over 65 who are in the cab industry and who feel they're getting a bad shake and want to know if Mr Gill is going to do anything about it.

It goes on to say, "He stated, 'Too bad'"—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I would ask you to withdraw the part that you cannot say indirectly and that I will not allow you to say directly. You can't do a quote that is that way.

Mr Bisson: I withdraw. I'm sorry. I was just reading it. I didn't mean to offend anybody.

I want to know from my good friend Mr Gill where he stands on the seniors in the cab industry and where he'll

stand on that protest. I'm going to join these gentlemen and ladies. I'm sure all seniors will be there on the 10th. I'll be there at 11 o'clock to see what their concerns are. I just want to know what your position is going to be with regard to these seniors in the cab industry.

I also want to say to the member across the way that your government has chosen. You guys are clearly picking sides. When it comes to helping, you had a choice: a universal policy that helps everyone, or a policy that helps Frank Stronach and some of the richest people in Ontario get more in their pockets, or one that helps seniors with lower incomes. As New Democrats, we would have chosen to help seniors with lower incomes. We might even have chosen a universal policy, but I think we probably would have chosen to go with the people on lower incomes. You guys helped Frank Stronach. You've helped all kinds of people at the upper echelons—

Mr Kormos: Galen Weston.

Mr Bisson: Yes, Galen Weston and all those people. We know it costs money to spend your winter in Monaco. Parking your yacht at a berth in Monaco is so expensive—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Comments and questions?

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I want to pick up on the comments from my colleague from Eglinton-Lawrence about this government's attitude toward the homeless. The member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton recites, as if suddenly this is the new religion, Mr Flaherty's policies. This is a desperate government. It was very appropriate, even though the member was off-topic, to bring up those kinds of things. The idea—talk to the police; talk to the workers. They don't want to be involved in rounding people out of snow banks. They do that now voluntarily. The question this member does not want to ask is, why is that the best option? Why does any homeless person live under bridges in Ernie Eves's Ontario?

When I see this crass appeal to seniors, I know seniors are going to be asking themselves a slightly different question: not "Who's putting money in my pocket?" but "Do I feel proud of the province I built up? Do I feel proud walking down Bay Street stepping over homeless people because nobody cared all these years? Do I feel proud there are double the number of people out there"—and not people, as the member inferred, unable to provide for themselves, with no better options. Frail people, yes; people without necessarily the strength to contend with a lot of things like disease, health and so forth; people who in the past lived lives of dignity. Many of them are approaching their senior years.

The government would say, just as they would in the proposal in the bill in front of us, that somehow they have a simplified solution. It would not do what I think the seniors of this province want in the province they helped to build. They want dignity for these people. They do not want a government that's not prepared to really understand what the prerequisites are of having those

people belong to society. Seniors know what it feels like to be alone, to be isolated, to feel like you don't matter, and they know that applies to homeless people as well. For the member opposite to stand up and toss off an insincere attempt to help folks, I think seniors will see through.

Mr Kormos: I think the members are being awfully hard on the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale. I think they are. I think they're perhaps even being a bit unfair to him. Look, he's reading the government's spin. You've got to understand that here's a government very much in an election mode, pre-election election mode—they can't quite make up their minds about that—and what he's got to do is try to spin this stuff, and he's paid well to do it.

Again, I don't quarrel—look, Mr Gill has needs as well. He has to support himself. His wardrobe is an attractive, albeit expensive, one.

I know there's a price for people, but I've always remarked at how some people will compromise themselves for what is, in relative terms, a relatively low price.

Look, that's what New Democrats have been saying about the spin. Here's Tory spin and then there's Liberal spin and then there's Tory spin and Liberal spin. That's why New Democrats are committed to substance. That's why, as New Democrats enter into this election campaign—and don't kid yourselves; we're entering into one. It has to come sooner or later. The Tories only have one more year, and we're going to hear more and more of the Tory spin.

So don't be critical of Mr Gill for doing his job; he's paid to do it. This is his job: to read the scripts that are written for him by the Premier's office and by the \$1,000-a-day consultants and by the little pundits who hang out there behind the Speaker's chair. They're here monitoring him. There are eyes watching him.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale has two minutes to reply.

Mr Gill: I do want to thank the members who took part, even though they were all wrong: the member from Eglinton-Lawrence, the member from Timmins-James Bay, the member from Parkdale-High Park and the member from Niagara Centre—a good friend of mine, by the way. I thank him for trying to say good things about me.

I sometimes wonder about the member from Timmins-James Bay. As he flies around in his plane, he's talking about all these socialist activities. That's what he does. He has a plane, and more power to him.

He talked about Frank Stronach and Belinda Stronach. They have a great training facility in my riding, where they train the young people to become excellent mechanics and tool and die makers. Frank Stronach is, as you know, a first-generation immigrant. He did not come in with millions of dollars in his pocket. He came in to work hard. He didn't know much English, like me, but eventually he made a great life for himself. He's a great employer and he's a worldwide businessman, and I certainly welcome enterprising people like that. We

should not be talking about those people in a very derogatory language, as if they're at fault of some kind. They're great contributors.

The member from Eglinton-Lawrence talked about affordable housing. I know that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has announced an initiative which hopefully is going to relieve some of the problems. We don't have a magic solution. Some of these rent control policies that have been going on for years and years might be contributing to some of that. I think we should face that. We need to do more.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Kennedy: It is important to be talking about this particular bill because it was a pre-election initiative of the government. It probably was not meant to even be in the Legislature, being examined and looked at. As I understand it, it's unlikely to find its way to committee because the government still harbours some notion of taking it out on the road. It is perhaps the largest single bribe they have, in an electoral sense. It's something that appeals to people and something that might entice people.

I think the premise of this bill does deserve examining. So we are, again, grateful in a little way that the government has not been able to follow its apparent plan of having an election and not having things like this talked about in this House and looked at by the people of the province.

This is definitely an initiative that doesn't wear well with age. It really has that small-trinket allure. It sits there in the window and sparkles for a little while, but it is something that doesn't stand up to very much scrutiny. The tarnish and the baubly part of this becomes readily apparent.

We stand here in Seniors' Month to talk about seniors. We heard the minister, who's supposed to have a regard for seniors and how they're doing, promoting this. I guess this is the best the minister of seniors under a Conservative government thinks can be done for seniors. This certainly stands up against a whole range of things that haven't been done.

When we talk about the seniors in this province, we have to look at what they deserve, and we do have to talk about them as deserving some entitlement as people who have worked their entire lives and who have struggled through conditions that most people in this House, not having attained that age, are only somewhat familiar with. I speak for my generation. They took a lot for granted about people who have gone before. I believe that kind of feeling is what the government hoped for in speeding this thing through as a back-of-the-envelope election pledge. They would get people to see this as something to give back to our seniors. What could be wrong with that?

1710

Again, the premise is that somehow the government can afford to do this. We have heard from as reliable and austere financial sources as you can find that the government has a hole in its pocket. So when it's reaching in

and saying, "Here is something for you," ahead of the election, I think seniors in the province have probably become fairly conditioned to promises from any party, but particularly from this government as they've stepped through these last seven or eight years. They can be well advised that this government is going to have to give up something.

There is a \$5-billion risk factor, bigger than any budget of the provincial government and of comparable budgets anywhere else in the country in recent years. There just hasn't been this kind of construction that says that in order for the government to deliver this particular election bauble, they have to sell \$2.2 billion worth of something. Not one single item that the government is going to sell, and has to sell this year—I don't know if it's this piece of land; the Minister of Finance mentioned land the other day in estimates committee. What part of the heritage of this province would be sold for \$2.2 billion?

We know the past example, and it's a cautionary one. In order to afford stuff like this before the last election, the government sold Highway 407 for one price and then found out within a year that it was worth four times as much. And to get the money to go around and give away enticements to the province, they had to sell out all the users of the 407 for 99 years—unheard of. The most profitable toll highway anywhere in the world was a complete giveaway by the people opposite, supposedly portraying themselves as people with business acumen, and we've got international investors laughing their way to the bank at the way they've essentially been able to take advantage of our consumers, our citizens. So \$2.2 billion is missing.

There are \$700 million in cuts. What's going to be cut? In other words, to pay the \$450 million for this, part of the plan is to cut \$700 million somewhere else. Where? Will the minister responsible for seniors say which seniors' services are going to be cut to find \$700 million? Where is it?

On top of that, we understand there's another hole in the budget: about \$800 million for the cost of SARS. Where's that coming from? Where is the government going to provide for that? And built into the government's plan is \$770 million from the federal government, but it only happens if they run a surplus. It's not real money in the sense that you can absolutely count it. Most of the financial analysts out there don't count on it; a desperate government does.

A government with a \$5-million hole in its budget is offering a \$450-million bauble to the seniors of this province. The premise, I think, is that somehow that's the calculation and that's the way that seniors derive themselves. There certainly are seniors in this province who, despite the fact that they deserve better and have worked their way through their lives, count their pennies. The government opposite has spent some of those seniors' pennies by having focus groups with seniors.

What bothers seniors is that they don't like to pay for what they don't get. They've asked every member of this

House at one time or another, “Why do we pay education taxes if we don’t have the benefits?” Why indeed, if the government opposite cancels seniors programs in Toronto, for example? They take over the Toronto board and cancel them. Thirty thousand seniors depended on that for their development.

This bill narrows the view of seniors. What kind of Ontario do they get to live in? Do they get to live in a province where they belong, where they’re respected, where they deserve to be, or are they just votes to be bought at election time? If they belong, they deserve to be in those schools taking those courses and not hijacked for the prices. This government took it away from them, unceremoniously and with no consultation took those courses away from them in Toronto and elsewhere in the province and made it very difficult for them to have access to those kinds of resources. That’s what they did in terms of their relationship, particularly with education.

But even going back further, one of the first things the government did was to add a charge on the drug benefit—and worse. First they added a charge, which causes concern and consternation. As they go through every new year, they have to pay the deductibles up front. It’s a significant charge for people living on the margins. They are counting their pennies. But they remember that comes from this government that says it needed that money.

The seniors of this province, even though they were thrown into some extra level of hardship, didn’t kick up that big a fuss. But you know what the government did the next year? It charged them twice. This government charged them twice for the same entitlement in terms of being able to pay their deductible. We in the opposition were able to get that \$30-million mugging of extra benefit from seniors restored. It took a little bit of doing, but we actually got the extra three months added back on. But it still remains that governments—the Harris government at the time, now the Harris-Eves government—picked the pockets of seniors really early on. Did they then make sure they saw the benefits? No. They have been promoting, up to this point, tax cuts that don’t really touch seniors because they’re outside of their high-earning years. That’s who’s been benefiting from the tax cuts. At that time, this government borrowed \$11 billion. We pay a million dollars a day in interest for the money they borrowed for their premature tax cuts of which seniors had almost no benefit whatsoever and in fact had to go into their own pockets to pay for. And there was Mr Harris’s hand—Mr Eves’s, actually, in his role as Treasurer—in their pockets, taking the money out for drug benefits.

What about the seniors in terms of what they want? It’s not every senior who needs the health care and the things leading up to it, but certainly every senior has to be mindful of what would happen. A lot of them fought and sacrificed in years past, first to buy their health care, mortgage their homes, and then to get medicare happening here. They endowed that to us as their children. And what did we do in return? Cancelled 3,000 chronic-care beds—2,500 of them with seniors in them at the time—

where they got higher levels of care that maintained their dignity, that brought them rehabilitation, that gave them a chance to get back with their families and enjoy their lives. Where are they today? Many of them are warehoused in long-term-care facilities that can’t meet those needs, 3,000 seniors, forgotten by this government, parked away, warehoused in no uncertain terms.

And that is where seniors like Ed Whitehill found themselves, in our general hospitals—Ed Whitehill, 85 years old, in Peterborough, a few years ago, his first time back in hospital in 40 years except for the fundraising he did to build up the civic hospital. And what did he find? He found himself the 15th or 16th person, lying on his back in the hallway, thanks to the policies of this government toward seniors and others who needed health care. What did those people in the hallway, looking up at the bright fluorescent lights, unable to get the attention they deserved, hear the next day? It was Mr Whitehill’s daughter, yelling, “How long has my father been lying here, dead?” Mr Whitehill in Peterborough died. He died unattended, not because the nurses didn’t care, not because the doctors weren’t capable, but because the system would not deliver the dignity of a bed and a place in that particular hospital, because this government that year had cut \$600 million—\$600 million on top of an earlier cut of \$400 million away from the operating budgets of hospitals. They fired nurses to the tune of \$400 million.

And here we are. I know it’s an anxiety for seniors in my riding, because I’ve heard from them. They want to know, “Can we have the nurses full-time?” They go to the emergency at St Joseph’s hospital in west Toronto and they see that there are temporary nurses there. We now know the cost that that has: \$100, \$125 an hour this government is prepared to pay to companies to bring in nurses they can find somewhere but not to pay the price to have constant attention from nurses who are working full-time themselves.

That’s the legacy this proposal is walking into. This is what you’re proposing to seniors: “Take the money and run. Don’t worry about those other services.” That’s what the government is saying to the people today. We find, as Mr Whitehill kind of found, and others, that there is this ageism that has now worked into our health system. This government, contented and comfortable itself, has forced the system to triage, and some of that, a subject that very few want to talk about, is a discrimination against older people unable to access the same services as younger people. If one member opposite believes that’s not true, then they haven’t visited their local hospitals and had a heart-to-heart with the kinds of decisions that have to be made in a system of rationing that’s taking place in this province today.

1720

My local hospital, just like most of these members’ hospitals, except if there has been an election visit—if there has been an election visit, then the hospital has got some money given to it in a big cheque. That other pre-election plan, I guess, went a little by the boards. But

many hospitals haven't had such a visit, and the hospitals that seniors depend on for their care don't know their budget for last year yet. The government has taken the system from when it used to tell hospitals the budget three months in advance so they could plan, hire nurses, plan their surgery schedules and do the things they needed to do. Now it's sitting here at the end of the fiscal year, 14 or 15 months after the beginning of the fiscal year, and it still hasn't told many hospitals how much money they're getting, and they're almost all running deficits. So they have to temper the services they offer to seniors, who by their age and frailty are above-average users of some of those facilities, necessarily and by intent. We want them to have those services. The government's policies would deny that.

Similarly, in the area of long-term care, this government got into some kind of deal with a lot of private operators to build long-term-care beds. They built building capacity and they changed the rules. Some of the members opposite will have, for example, a celebration of Portugal Day. People with Portuguese backgrounds, people with Polish backgrounds, Ukrainian backgrounds, are finding it harder under this government's policies to get into the facilities that actually cater to their needs. One of the needs of our seniors is to deal with facilities of their language as they get older. But this government had deals and arrangements with private contractors that had beds that were going wanting, so they changed the rules. You couldn't have your choices any more. Seniors have found themselves far flung from their loved ones, far flung from the environments that some of them helped, through their long careers, to build up with their donations so that they and their extended families would have someplace to go. Suddenly, that's denied by the change in policy of this government.

Of course, we know how Seniors' Month began, with the government running afraid of its other policy of increasing fees. They say, suddenly, that we won't see those 15% fee hikes from a government that provides the least amount of funding per senior in long-term care, because almost all are seniors, an average age of 85, coming into our long-term-care facilities. They get the least amount of money per patient anywhere in the country, here in Ernie Eves's—legacy of Mike Harris's—Ontario. That's what happens in terms of seniors and what they can look forward to, yet this government says it's now got extra money to hand out. It can hand out extra money. It can hit seniors with a 15% increase, but today it has extra money to hand out. A \$5-billion hole in its budget, but it has extra money to hand out. How did that happen? How did this government come to believe that seniors were so gullible that they would go for that?

There's one good thing I want to say about the seniors' policies, and that's some of the fraud workshops. We've been holding them in my riding. I would really caution that this particular bill be part of that presentation, that it be explained to seniors how to watch not just for the people who want to repair your roof and the people who want to take you to town for your sewer

backup, but actually for the governments who would put forward this kind of real betrayal of trust for seniors. There may be seniors out there willing to take it at face value, because that's the kind of province they grew up in. They didn't grow up with slick political parties like this, who take their marching orders from people in the backrooms who say, "Here's what you should do: you should throw over any responsible approach to programs, even fiscal responsibility. Get rid of that. Instead, you should take a purely political road here. You need to save your hides, people. That's what you've got to do, and you've got to offer something." That's what we have in front of us: an exposed package that's meant to appeal to people in the crassest way at election time. It's not a thoughtful policy.

Where did this come from in terms of the priorities of this province? How did this come out?

It relates to housing; it relates to education. Let's talk about housing first. Seniors' housing in this province: dead, cold, shut down. There is no more seniors' housing from them, because I guess they think people aren't getting older and won't need those safe and warm accommodations. Indeed, what happened to the people living in the High Park apartments that were bought out by some of the people who benefited from the policies of this government? Minto bought out dozens of apartment buildings. What happened? They used this government's policy of maximum rent and increased rents 35% to 40%. In this House, we asked them, "Fix that loophole. Do something about it." Instead, they stood silently by as senior after senior after senior lost their apartment. Some of them had been there for 15 and 20 and 25 years, and they got shipped out by this government's approach to their housing.

Interjection.

Mr Kennedy: Incredibly, one of the members opposite, I believe one of the York region members for Oak Ridges, talks about what the vacancy rate is. These same apartments that under some kind of balanced referee system cost \$800 or \$900, cost \$1,400 today. There are a couple of them vacant. Seniors couldn't get back in there to get a look at them. They can't get into the buildings. The lovely places they deserve to live, in walking distance from High Park, and you kicked them out of there with your reckless policies. That's what you did.

Interjection.

Mr Kennedy: You're happy to break a few eggs. I guess you are. I guess you must be, because that's exactly what you did.

In my own riding, Loyola Arrupe, seniors' housing that did exist, was being run, and this government, in its rush to download, took one of the better, if not one of the best, places for seniors to live and took away its subsidy. We walked across the aisle and talked to the Minister of Housing at the time, Mr Clement, and said, "Look, this is a mistake. It needs to be fixed." It took weeks and weeks. We had to bring down 60 seniors here, and suddenly Mr Clement changed his mind. It shows the willingness to be

reckless with the well-being of seniors—not to be stewards, not to show trust or respect, not to conserve dignity. That’s not what this particular brand of Progressive Conservatives does. “Progressive” I guess doesn’t work but “Conservatives” does. That’s the record and that’s clearly what’s happening in front of us.

When it comes to the property taxes, what’s happening to the people in my riding because of their fair market value is that their market valuations—what they said they wouldn’t do, they’ve done—have gone up 60% in the last four years. This tax, even if it wasn’t such an election bribe, even if it wasn’t something that they were probably going to have to take back or cut something else that matters to seniors to make happen, even if that wasn’t true, they would still be giving back only a little bit of what they already took away.

Look at the case in Toronto this year. They are dining out on the fact that there’s an increase in the value of housing. That has slammed seniors. This tax needs to be curtailed in areas that are subject to up-and-down speculation. Some of the members opposite are affected by that, and I haven’t heard a peep from them on why we need to protect our seniors better. What did they put in their bill about property taxes? That the municipality “may” protect seniors. What’s offered in Toronto? You can add it on at the end of your days. You can pay that tax and you can pass nothing on to your children. That’s the best they could do.

Now they’re prepared to go around the wisdom of seniors and say, “We’re going to give you this.” They understand well what this is about. They understand the trade-off they’re being asked to make. This is divisive. If they thought it would get them votes, they would say to 22-year-olds, “You don’t pay for hip surgery any more.” It’s divisive. They underestimate the seniors of this province.

They’re concerned with education. They want to see it done well. This government has cut education in Toronto by 25% and the property taxes have gone up incredibly. That’s true in a number of the members’ ridings. They would say to the seniors of this province, “Take this electoral bribe, take this inducement, take this incentive and don’t worry about all those other things that happened to you in terms of chronic care, health care, home care, housing and so on. Don’t worry about your future.” You’re saying the wrong thing to them, because they will worry about the future of people yet to come in this province. That’s what seniors in this province care about.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Kormos: Thank goodness, because after this 10-minute round of comments and questions, I get to speak. I’ve been looking forward to it all afternoon. I’ve been sitting here—I’d like to say “patiently,” but quite frankly, I’ve been quite anxious. I’ve been chomping at the bit, eager to get the floor and talk to folks about matters with respect to this bill and I suppose a few other things that, undoubtedly, I will relate directly to this bill.

I saw an interesting item this morning in the Toronto Sun. It’s about when Stockwell Day, an Alliance

Member of Parliament, was with a Liberal MP called Mark Eyking. They were swimming at the beach in Morocco. Eyking, the Liberal MP, was swept away by an undertow. This isn’t something that’s going to end with a punchline, friends. I’m reading from the Toronto Sun this morning. Day says it was a horrifying experience. He doesn’t indicate he made any effort to save Liberal MP Eyking, but says it was a horrible experience.

The question is, what were Stockwell Day, Alliance Member of Parliament, and Liberal Member of Parliament Mark Eyking doing on a beach in Casablanca when they are Canadian Members of Parliament? Well, it was a junket; it was yet another junket. What ticks off seniors where I come from is politicians taking junkets to Casablanca, Morocco. And there’s more, which I will be more than pleased to elaborate on in around eight minutes’ time when I get the floor.

1730

Hon Tina R. Molinari (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I am pleased to enter my comments on the debate from the member for Parkdale-High Park. What this bill does, and what needs to be clarified, is that this is helping seniors stay in their homes. These are the homes where they’ve had their birthdays, their Christmas parties, their holiday parties. What this does is allow them to keep their homes.

This bill, in the full amount, is about a \$450-million benefit throughout the province. That means an average senior across the province, or in my riding of Thornhill, will receive about \$475 per year. To the seniors in Thornhill, this means a lot.

I also need to take this opportunity to comment on some of the comments made by the member for Eglinton-Lawrence, who talked about the hard-working councillor in the city of Vaughan, Mario Racco, who happens to be a Liberal candidate. He was working so hard that in April 1995 the Toronto Star said he didn’t even support funding to fight the closure of the Keele Valley landfill site. This is on the Oak Ridges moraine, the one the member for Eglinton-Lawrence purports to support all the time. It’s clear that this member is very much inconsistent with their party, the flip-flop they constantly do, and continue to do.

The people of Ontario have to recognize that this party and this government care about the people of Ontario, care about the seniors, and that’s why we want to help seniors by giving them back an education tax credit that they pay year after year. This will help every senior in the province. I don’t know where the other side of this House is coming from in not supporting this very important legislation.

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): I don’t know how many times this government needs to be reminded of that fact that their tax-cutting schemes always favour those at the highest end of the income scale. Why is it so difficult for you to understand that, particularly when it comes to seniors? It is absolutely astounding that this government cannot comprehend that

their tax cuts go to help those people—it's irrefutable. Those are the facts.

I would like to understand why this government time and time again fails to understand why those people at the highest end of the income scale don't need the help they're offering. Many of them have approached us and said, "We don't want this. It's embarrassing that we have to have a tax cut of the kind you're talking about for those people at the highest income levels." They don't need it, they don't even want it, and yet you're shoving it off to them. As I said before, if this were targeted to seniors with fixed income levels—we used to have, if you'll recall, and some of you will not recall, a property tax grant for seniors in the province. It was capped and it was the kind that—

Mr Kormos: In 1992, NDP.

Mr Cordiano: And I think that having it targeted to those seniors who could use it most is—

Hon Mr Klees: Discriminating.

Mr Cordiano: No, it's not discriminating. It is reasoned, it's rational, it's logical, for God's sake. You can't get through to these people, because the ideology gets in the way. It blinds you. It makes you completely unreasoned when it comes to taxes. Those who can most afford it don't need it. Why are you giving it to them? If you targeted those seniors who really need it, imagine what you could do with the \$450 million. That's what we're asking for on this side of the House.

Mr Bisson: The government says they've got to be fair to everybody. That's why they've invented this particular scheme. I guess they've got a funny way of describing what's fair, but let's take a look at what this means.

Poor people like Conrad Black, who's got a couple properties in Canada, a little bit of property probably worth a few million dollars—he doesn't even live in Canada any more. But it's important because we've got to be fair to Conrad Black to make sure that Conrad gets the kind of rebate or, I should say, gets taxes back, a gift, a little bit of corporate welfare going out, so that he can afford to live in England and be part of the polo club, rub shoulders with the royals—very important—the Westons and the Stronachs. It's important for them too because they're hard-working people, like my good friend said. Mr Stronach immigrated to Canada, true; worked hard, true; built an empire, true, and we're very grateful. But do Conrad Black and Mr Stronach need yet another tax break?

I just say that you have a funny way of describing what's fair. I guess it's important. We've got to treat these poor little rich people a little bit fairer. I understand that polo clubs have increased the fees for members. You've got to get the money from somewhere. It would be unfair to ask somebody like Conrad Black to pay his polo club fees out of his chump change, his bank account. We should have the taxpayers of Ontario fund it by way of a tax credit, while seniors living on a modest income somewhere in Ontario get 120 bucks because they're in an apartment and they happen to be on a

pension that pays about \$1,200 or \$1,400 a month. I say that Tories have a funny way of describing "fair."

I'm a New Democrat. I say "fair" is helping the one at the bottom. Help the one who needs the money. They're the people who need help from the government, not people like Frank Stronach.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Parkdale-High Park has two minutes to respond.

Mr Kennedy: I appreciate the comments of all the members. I understand that the member from Thornhill didn't respond that directly to my comments, but I did hear a comment from her across the way that we shouldn't discriminate against Conrad Black. That perfectly encapsulates this bill, that the member for Thornhill would think we can't discriminate against Mr Black. With all respect, Mr Black is a Canadian citizen and he should not be subject to discrimination. But the point here is that seniors in this province suffer discrimination. They suffer discrimination from a lack of ambition on their behalf by this government. It's reflected in health care, in housing and in the security they feel about the places around them.

That's the point. It's not about the money the government pretends to put in their pockets; it's what they would do instead. It's that attitude that I think seniors in this province, with the experience they've had and, frankly, not the stereotypes, but the wisdom that has accumulated—setting those detectors on high is going to be necessary as this government steps through its abuse of this House toward an election campaign.

Again, we've seen the cuts in housing. We've seen what that has meant in terms of the lack of rent control. This money is already missing from the pockets of seniors. We would be in favour of ways to restore security to seniors, but that security is going to come from some of the services they need to have there for them, and most of all from a government that is going to attend to their needs.

We have a growing senior population. We have a need for—not everything. Some in the government would say you can do everything. You can't. There's a \$5-billion hole in the budget. Something would have to give. Someone probably would have to be hurt in order for this to be delivered. We're telling the people of this province, "You can't have everything, but you can have and expect reasonably"—what this government hasn't done—"the important things to be done well." That includes a dignified, respectful place to be a senior in Ontario under new management.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

1740

Mr Kormos: Finally I get the floor. Here it is the end of the day on a Thursday, the end of the Legislature's week, for all intents and purposes, because the Legislature doesn't sit on Fridays. I'm headed back down to Niagara tomorrow morning. I'm going to be seeing folks and doing things down in Welland, Thorold, Pelham and south St Catharines, as well as on Saturday, through Sunday, when we're back up here again.

Look, where I come from, and I've told you this before, seniors are deathly concerned about the defunding and ongoing underfunding of health care by this government. Seniors are deathly concerned about the incredible shortage of nursing staff in our hospitals. Seniors who want to try to continue living in their own homes in their senior and retirement years are terrified by the cuts to home care services that they rely on. Seniors are confounded by the new, higher and more frequent user fees they're confronted with on a daily basis. Seniors are appalled by electricity rate increases flowing from this government's privatization and deregulation of Ontario hydroelectricity; it doubled, tripled and quadrupled their hydro rates. Seniors know that even now, with the phony hydro rate cap, they have been paying, as have other taxpayers, over \$1.5 billion to maintain that artificial price of 4.3 for Ernie Eves's privatized and deregulated hydroelectricity. Seniors are concerned about their grandkids. Seniors are concerned about their children who have little ones and can't get them into daycare centres. Seniors know full well about the huge lineups for daycare. They try to help out but, as they get older, it becomes more difficult for them to deal with little toddlers and preschool kids. They know that daycare is good for kids.

You see, where I come from, seniors believe that Ontario Hydro has got to be restored to public ownership in a fully regulated system that provides electricity at cost, just like the New Democrats advocate in their platform.

Where I come from, seniors believe that we as a province have to respond promptly to the Romanow report and restore funding to health care, get nurses back in their jobs and respond to the doctor crisis.

Seniors where I come from know that we have to respond to the Rozanski report and get that \$2 billion back into educational funding.

Seniors where I come from know that tuition fees for their grandkids increasing by over 150%—\$20,000 and \$21,000 a year in tuition alone—are preventing their grandkids from getting the college and university educations that those kids, darn it, are entitled to.

Where I come from, seniors have been beaten up brutally by stock markets manipulated by criminal CEOs, the Enrons and Nortels of North America that have stripped their modest assets bare. Seniors are appalled that John Roth can get a multi-million dollar payout after destroying a company that employed thousands of people—and manipulates stock markets so that people like those seniors, who had modest investments, are left penniless.

Seniors where I come from are concerned about increased property taxes across the board—their own, but their kids' and their grandkids' as well. They've seen those property taxes increase dramatically since 1995, as this government has downloaded more and more on to municipalities.

Seniors where I come from are appalled by a government that goes to a nursing home and tells seniors in that

nursing home that they should get out to work, because this government no longer recognizes, understands, accepts or will tolerate a retirement age of 65.

Seniors where I come from are the kinds of working women and men who have fought during their lifetimes in their workplaces, as trade unionists, non-trade unionists and small business people, to get a younger retirement age so they could retire, without dying within six months, and enjoy their retirement years with some level of decency and dignity. They fought for better pensions. They fought for safer workplaces so they wouldn't be maimed and crippled during their working lives.

Seniors where I come from know that this government has raided the budgets of health care and education to fund the outrageous tax cuts for the richest people in this province. This government's bogus budget alone put an additional \$3.5 million of income tax back into Frank Stronach's pocket—not his corporate income, his personal income. Every penny of that \$3.5 million is coming from health care and education and environmental protection. It's coming from the Ministry of Labour, which means darned near no labour inspectors doing real live on-site labour inspections. It comes from the Ministry of Agriculture, which means we have but a handful of meat inspectors left here in the province of Ontario, notwithstanding the obvious risk of Ontario residents' exposure to mad cow disease, among other things.

Seniors where I come from know that the de-funding of public health—because it was from the de-funding of public health that the money came to subsidize the Frank Stronachs and the Conrad Blacks and the John Roths—oh, and the Isabel Bassetts and the Rosedale and Forest Hill ilk. Seniors where I come from know that it was the gutting of public health care that was the process whereby money was raised to provide tax cuts for the richest people in this province.

Seniors where I come from watched in horror as this government walked into a nursing home to tell old folks to get back to work, knowing full well that already far too many seniors are working. They're working, not because they want the social interaction. Good grief, they can get that down at the seniors' club, the Rose City Seniors' Activity Centre in Welland, the Thorold seniors' centre, the Merriton seniors' centre. They've got all sorts of things they'd like to be doing with their lives. But no, they're out working, and they're out working at K-Mart and McDonald's and other minimum-wage jobs.

Seniors where I come from know that this government has been criminal in its abuse of the lowest-paid workers in this province by freezing minimum wage at \$6.85 for the last eight years—not a penny increase in salaries for the lowest income workers in this province from this government. The NDP increased minimum wages four times in the years 1990 to 1995. This government hasn't increased minimum wage by a penny. Just who are those minimum-wage workers? More often than not, they're women and more often than not, they're single moms working out there, not just at one job, but two and three jobs to raise their kids.

This government's disdain and contempt for those lowest-paid workers has meant that they've suffered a 20% income loss over the course of the last eight years, because that's what inflation has done to their minimum wages of \$6.85 an hour. That's why New Democrats believe that we need an immediate increase of the minimum wage to \$8 an hour with an annual review so that never again do the lowest-paid workers in this province fall behind.

Minimum-wage workers are not the only concern of seniors. Persons with disabilities, persons whose disability benefits haven't seen a penny increase in eight years and who have suffered the same 20% erosion in their benefits—a benefit that was unliveable in the first instance, but has forced those people into the most horrible states of poverty as a result of the passage of those eight years. Seniors where I come from know that disability benefits have to be increased promptly, first to reflect the 20% erosion in their incomes by virtue of inflation and, second, to respond to the realities of rental rates that have skyrocketed in this province because this government has abandoned rent control and fairness for tenants. Let me tell you, a whole lot of those tenants are seniors too, and they've been hit and hit and hit again by rental rates that have gone through the roof.

Seniors are outraged when they witness politicians here at Queen's Park, Conservatives and Liberals, collaborating to pass legislation that would give themselves a 28% salary increase, and not a penny for the lowest-income workers, not a penny for persons with disabilities, not a penny for persons on social assistance. Yet Conservatives and Liberals can try to sneak through in the dark of the night, greased up like a carnival pig, legislation that gives MPPs here, Liberals and Tories, a 28% salary increase, already among the top 3% and 4% of income earners in this province. That's obscene and that's criminal.

1750

Seniors in this province are appalled at the junkets politicians reward themselves with. I mentioned earlier a Toronto Star article this morning. One Stockwell Day, a federal member of Parliament—I think he's from somewhere out west; I've heard his name before—along with a Liberal MP called Mark Eyking, whose name I've never heard before—well, have you ever heard of him, Mr Arnott, Liberal MP Mark Eyking?

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): No, but I bet he's never heard of me.

Mr Kormos: Has anybody here heard of Liberal MP Mark Eyking? He's got to be as backbench as you can get. The Liberal MP Mark Eyking is on a junket—this sounds like a joke, but it isn't. It sounds like a set-up by a stand-up comic for a punchline, but it isn't.

Liberal Mark Eyking, whom I've never heard of—I don't know whether these folks have heard of him and nobody across the way has ever heard of him. Here's Liberal Mark Eyking, obviously from somewhere in Canada, and Stockwell Day, whom I have heard of—I can't quite recall in what context—off on a junket to Casablanca, Morocco, and I'm going, "This is remarkable."

It was only because they found themselves in some undertow as they were swimming in the ocean—I mean here we are—this is not a Humphrey Bogart movie; this is real life. Day in the Speedo, Eyking—well, I presume. I've never been to Casablanca, but here are these two clowns in their Speedos on the beach in Casablanca, Morocco, on the taxpayers' tab. No, they're not meeting high-level officials. They're swimming off this white sandy beach with the little straw-roofed kiosks, with the drinks with the cherries and the little umbrellas in them.

So here we are, a Liberal MP and an Alliance MP on the taxpayers' tab in Morocco. Get this. You've got to understand—maybe you don't have to, but both MPs were on a trip to Morocco and several other countries to gain a better understanding of the post-September 11 Muslim world.

Mr Arnott's laughing. Mr Arnott cannot contain himself. Mr Arnott is holding his sides. Mr Arnott has tears trickling down his face. He finds the humour in this as readily as I do. Taxpayers, including seniors—on a junket to Morocco among a total of 11. Now catch this. They didn't identify the countries, but I bet you they were all in warm climes. I bet you Morocco wasn't the only one—

Mr Arnott: Let me see that clipping.

Mr Kormos: Come on over here, one of the pages. I bet you Morocco wasn't the only one with a white sandy beach. That's shocking stuff. That's what drives seniors—take that over to Arnott, but bring it back to me because I may have to refer to it again—just wild.

What did we discover today? This isn't restricted to federal MPs. What we find out today in the Globe and Mail—and this isn't even a multi-party junket or a group; this is a solo performance—is that the Minister of Energy, who's within weeks, possibly days, of no longer being the Minister of Energy is ringing up 27Gs, 27 grand, 27,000 bucks in airfares to visit Rome, Paris, London and, oh, so beautiful—and it is beautiful—Glasgow. The Minister of Energy, confesses that the workload was so low—there were only 12 meetings in total arranged for a 14-day tour through Europe, and all of them were before 12 noon. Had it been the Premier going, none of them would have been until after 12 noon, because we know the Premier doesn't like the early morning stuff.

We've got the feds sending MPs on a junket. Do seniors find this outrageous? You bet your boots they do. And seniors find it outrageous that this government sends one of its ministers, who is about to be deposed—

The Deputy Speaker: I'm sure the member for Niagara Centre is going to get back to Bill 43. I'd like him to get on with that part of the debate, please.

Mr Kormos: Mr Speaker, I want to thank you for your direction and guidance. I want to tell you that I respect your position and appreciate, as I always have, your efforts today to get me back on track.

What I want to say to you when we're talking about Bill 43 is, let's understand where our tax dollars are being spent. Bill 43 invests tax dollars in Conrad Black

and his property taxes; it invests tax dollars in Galen and Hilary Weston and their property taxes; it invests tax dollars in John Roth, the Nortel honcho who ripped off thousands and walked away with millions.

Let me put it to you this way. Back in the old days, I was a criminal lawyer and I used to act for a lot of bad people; I really did. I was a criminal defence lawyer. I acted for bikers—the whole nine yards. I've never met a biker who's stolen as much money from more people as John Roth did during the course of his manipulation of Nortel. If anybody deserves to go to jail, it's guys like Roth, who have ripped off seniors and a whole lot of other people who worked hard to save their money. I just hope there is a cell left in our overcrowded jails for the corporate criminals who have ripped off so many.

Where do our tax dollars go? Our tax dollars go to subsidize the property taxes of Conrad Black, Galen and Hilary Weston, and Isabel Bassett herself—it may not be this year, because she may not be 65 yet, but I'm sure she's close. Where do our tax dollars go? Our tax dollars go to send the Minister of Energy on \$27,000 air-flight-alone junkets to tour Rome, Paris, London and Glasgow, to sleep and stay in the finest hotels, to drink and eat at the most expensive restaurants and then to hide and conceal the costs from the taxpayer by running them in no small part, to the tune of at least five grand and maybe as much as 10 grand, through OPG. That's what ticks seniors off where I come from.

They're hard pressed to listen to this government, its cabinet ministers or its backbenchers talk about what this government is doing for seniors, when what should be of real concern to seniors where I come from is what this government is doing to seniors. This government is making our folks and our grandfolks, who have worked hard all their lives, subsidize its rich corporate bosses, subsidize the profitable and wealthy corporations. This government is the one telling retirees to get up off their butts and get out there to work, instead of telling those retirees, like New Democrats are committed to doing, that they have pension plans that are secure, that are adequate and that will allow them to live out their senior years in decency and dignity. This government isn't about what it has done for seniors; it's about what it has done to seniors.

The Deputy Speaker: I now deem that a motion to adjourn has been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

ONTARIO NORTHLAND RAILWAY

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The member for Timmins-James Bay has indicated dissatisfaction with an answer to a question he asked of the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. The member for Timmins-James Bay now has five minutes to explain.

1800

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Just to recap the question last Tuesday: we know that the Ontario government was planning and working toward the privatization of the Ontario Northland Railway commission, and people of northern Ontario, by and large, are opposed to that sale and want to keep Ontario Northland within public control. What happened was that Canadian National Railway had been working with the provincial government toward the purchase of the said railway.

As New Democrats, we have been saying that there's no way CN was ever going to buy the ONR and guarantee the jobs that are in North Bay now and guarantee the employment levels that are there now and, in fact, even services at the current levels, which quite frankly need to be increased. To the government's credit, what happened was that CN was not able to give the kind of assurances that the northerners wanted when it came to employment and service levels, and when the government became convinced that in fact CN would not at least comply with those requests, CN basically backed away from the table.

My question to the minister was very simple: is the government at this point going to back away from the privatization agenda of the Ontario Northland commission? That was a simple question. The minister this week unfortunately did not answer the question, so I put the question again to him today. First question: will the government now categorically say, "We are not going to privatize Ontario Northland," yes or no? The second part of the question is, if the answer is no, that you're not going to—which I hope it is—what plans do you have to deal with some of the issues that have to be dealt with at the ONR?

We agree with the government, as do northerners, that there needs to be a type of restructuring at Ontario Northland in order to provide the kind of service that northerners need. The current schedule that services passenger rail service along the corridor of Highway 11 is not adequate. People don't take the train in big numbers. Why? Nobody wants to get off the train at 3 o'clock in the morning in Kirkland Lake in the middle of winter when they're trying to get in from Toronto. So clearly we have some scheduling issues that we need to deal with.

Are we going to be investing the kind of money that we need in order to build up the infrastructure of not only rail passenger service, but also of freight services, so that we're able to do a better job servicing not only passengers, but the rail customers like Falconbridge and Tembec and others that utilize the railway? I guess the third part of investment is the true direction that Ontario Northland has to take, in my view, which is their role in economic development. Is the government going to work with us in northern communities to ensure that Ontario Northland gets into the business of economic development in northeastern Ontario by providing some of the necessary infrastructure to make it happen?

For example, tourism could be a large business in northeastern Ontario for all of the communities along the

Highway 11 corridor, and especially for the James Bay coast. If the government's not going to privatize, will they work with us and provide the capital needed and the ongoing support in order to do those things that are important to northeastern Ontario?

The Deputy Speaker: The Minister of Northern Development and Mines has five minutes to reply.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I want to thank my colleague across the floor from Timmins-James Bay for giving me the opportunity to speak once again on behalf of people in northeastern Ontario and on behalf of our employees at ON Rail and ONTC. I just want to begin by saying that, in your comments of the last four minutes, I don't disagree with a lot of what you've said. I think you did a pretty good summary, actually, of where the government has been on this issue.

Back in April of last year, I think Premier Eves made very clear the commitment of the government, as we worked toward improving service to our customers, making sure that tourism would be enhanced, that economic development would be enhanced. The track record of other railways in this country, and certainly in Ontario, is that they're not providing passenger service. We do that through ON Rail and we do that particularly up to Moosonee and with the Little Bear and the Polar Bear. All of that—protecting jobs, maintaining service, enhancing service, improving economic development opportunities—has always been part of the plan.

In April 2002, as we were looking to others to partner with us or perhaps at a sale of ON Rail, the Premier made it clear that the government's commitment during all of these discussions would be that, "If one of those proposals does not provide improved service to the people of northern Ontario and does not guarantee the jobs that are already there—if those basic criteria are not met—then we won't be accepting any of the proposals, if I have anything to say about it."

We went through a period, beginning particularly in October of last year, of exclusive negotiations with what the ONTC, the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission, board recommended to the government was the best proposal at that time among four or five proposals to meet the government's objectives of preserving jobs, of maintaining and enhancing economic and job opportunities in the north and along the northeastern Ontario corridor where this railway line runs.

At the end of the day, as the honourable members pointed out, after having talks with CN for quite a long period of time, they weren't able to meet our number one criterion set forth by the Premier, and that was protection of the jobs, protection of our employees.

Ontario taxpayers are providing \$19.7 million this year in subsidy to the ONTC, particularly the rail

division. I think northern and northeastern Ontario taxpayers, people who live, work and raise their families there, think it's worth every penny. I can't think of a rail line in North America that a government doesn't subsidize to some degree or another. In this particular case, we're subsidizing the non-commercial aspect, which is really the passenger aspect of the railway itself.

The future? The honourable member raises a good question, and that was his original question. If by some miracle someone came along with the gobs of money this valuable piece of real estate is worth, with the job protection guarantees and our economic development enhancement criteria and all the other things we have put forward as absolute bottom lines in any talks, then yes, we would look at it. But I think realistically the government is going to keep this railway. I don't see anyone else on the horizon.

We're going to work with the people and the unions that were represented in their proposal by the internal solutions group. We're going to work with the municipalities along the line, with everybody that has good, positive ideas about moving forward, improving service and opportunities for the people of northeastern Ontario, preserving those jobs until those people would naturally retire. We don't want to lay people off.

Again the subsidy itself is quite small in the overall scheme of things. When you think about it, it's just a few minutes of health care. When you've got a \$28-billion health care budget, just over \$19 million in rail subsidy is a pretty small price to pay for maintaining and enhancing economic prosperity in that part of the province.

So the immediate future, the foreseeable future is that the government will keep the rail line. It will continue to be owned by the province of Ontario. I look forward to working with the board, the municipalities and my colleague AL McDonald, who was absolutely crucial and instrumental in reaching the right decision with respect to our talks with CN. Rick Brassard, one of our candidates along the line, was also very helpful.

I want to thank, in the few seconds I have left, all the employees who waited so patiently during this process. At the end of the day, if I read the media, if I read the comments from our employees and municipal leaders in the northeast, the government made the right decision. We lived up to our promise. We're going to continue to support our workers at ON Rail, at ONTC and the people of northeastern Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: I deem the motion to adjourn has now been carried. Therefore, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 Monday afternoon, June 9, in the year of our Lord 2003.

The House adjourned at 1808.

**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
McMeekin, Bill Murdoch, Wayne Wettlaufer
Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

continued from overleaf

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Jeudi 5 juin 2003

AFFAIRES D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC ÉMANANT DES DÉPUTÉS

Loi de 2003 concernant la vérité sur Ipperwash, projet de loi 46, <i>M. Phillips</i>	
Rejetée.....	913

PREMIÈRE LECTURE

Loi de 2003 sur le Jour de la reconnaissance des anciens combattants, projet de loi 86, <i>M. Bartolucci</i>	
Adoptée.....	916
Loi de 2003 sur l'efficacité énergétique du secteur public, projet de loi 87, <i>M. Cordiano</i>	
Adoptée.....	916

DEUXIÈME LECTURE

Loi de 2003 sur l'allègement de l'impôt foncier résidentiel pour les personnes âgées de l'Ontario, projet de loi 43, <i>M^{me} Ecker</i>	
Débat présumé ajourné.....	952

CONTENTS

Thursday 5 June 2003

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Government accountability, private member's notice of motion number 9, <i>Mr Christopherson</i>	
Mr Christopherson	899, 906
Mr Phillips	900
Mr Kormos	901
Mr Martiniuk	901
Mr Agostino	902
Mr Prue	903
Mr Miller	904
Mr Bradley	904
Mr Tascona	905
Mr Bisson	905
Mr Wettlaufer	906
Agreed to	913
Truth About Ipperwash Act, 2003, Bill 46, <i>Mr Phillips</i>	
Mr Phillips	907, 912
Mr Mazzilli	908
Mr Bryant	908
Mr Bisson	909
Mr Curling	910
Mr Kennedy	911
Mr Prue	912
Negatived	913

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Canadian Environment Awards	
Mr Bradley	913
Government contract	
Mr Kormos	914
Maggie Maloney	
Mrs Munro	914
Forest industry	
Mr Gravelle	914
International Children's Festival of Mississauga	
Mr Sampson	914
Government's record	
Mr Duncan	915
Mr Smitherman	915
Aphasia Awareness Month	
Mr Jackson	915
Huntsville fire safety awards	
Mr Miller	915

FIRST READINGS

Veterans Appreciation Day Act, 2003, Bill 86, <i>Mr Bartolucci</i>	
Agreed to	916
Mr Bartolucci	916

Public Sector Energy Efficiency Act, 2003, Bill 87, <i>Mr Cordiano</i>	
Agreed to	916
Mr Cordiano	916

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

Environmental protection	
Mr Stockwell	916
Mr Bradley	918
Ms Churley	918

ORAL QUESTIONS

Minister's expenses	
Mr Bryant	919, 920, 923, 924
Mr Stockwell	919, 920, 921, 923 924, 925
Ms Churley	921
Mr Kormos	921, 925
Mr Tsubouchi	923
Protection for health care workers	
Ms Martel	922
Mr Clement	922

Transportation planning	
Mr Arnott	923
Mr Klees	923

Seniors' Month	
Mr Dunlop	924
Mr DeFaria	925

Ipperwash Provincial Park	
Mr Phillips	926
Mr Sterling	926

SARS	
Mr Arnott	926
Mr Newman	926

Healthy futures program	
Mr Peters	927
Mrs Johns	927

Pharmacists' dispensing fees	
Mr Jackson	927
Mr Clement	928

Home care	
Ms Martel	928
Mr Newman	928

PETITIONS

Home care	
Mrs Dombrowsky	929, 931
Long-term care	
Mr Bradley	930
Mr Curling	930, 931, 932
Mrs Dombrowsky	930

Aluminum smelter	
Mr Bradley	931

SECOND READINGS

Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, 2003, Bill 43, <i>Mrs Ecker</i>	
Mr Smitherman	932
Mr Bisson	932, 939, 943, 949
Mr DeFaria	933, 937
Mr Levac	935
Mr Kormos	936, 940, 944, 948 949
Mr O'Toole	936
Mr Curling	936, 937, 940
Mr Klees	936
Mrs Molinari	939, 948
Mr Colle	940, 943
Mr Gill	941, 944
Mr Kennedy	944, 945, 949
Mr Cordiano	948
Debate deemed adjourned	952

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

Ontario Northland Railway	
Mr Bisson	952
Mr Wilson	953

OTHER BUSINESS

Visitors	
Mr Levac	916
The Speaker	916
Mr Flaherty	929
Member's comments	
Mr Clark	929
The Speaker	929
Notice of dissatisfaction	
The Speaker	929

continued overleaf