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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 9 December 2003

Mardi 9 décembre 2003

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Greffier
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
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The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 25, 2003, on the motion by Mr Caplan that the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor to this House be taken into consideration as early as the first sessional day following passage of this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): When we were last discussing this issue Mr O'Toole had the floor. He's not here, so now we ask for further debate in rotation. The member for Guelph-Wellington.

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): Thank you, Mr Speaker. First of all, let me congratulate you on your election to your new role.

Normally, I would say that I am pleased to rise and speak to the motion; however, I must say that in this situation I'm really more aggravated than pleased, because this is probably the silliest debate I have ever taken part in. The idea that we have to have a debate about whether to have a debate to debate the speech from the throne is just mind-blowing; quite boggling. In 15 years as an elected trustee serving as a politician, I have never had a debate over whether to have a debate before. This is really quite astounding. I don't know—well, I do know why we're in this position.

I think it's worthwhile to let the public know what the history is, a little bit about why we're here. I may be a rookie MPP, but I have on various occasions attended the throne speech as a guest and sat up in the gallery. Just as somebody who has observed the process on a few occasions, I know that the Lieutenant Governor comes in and sits in the Speaker's chair and gives the speech from the throne, and normally the Lieutenant Governor leaves, which he did on this occasion. Then we have a little formality which arises from the fact that we have a British parliamentary system and originally there were two tiers: there was a House of Lords and a House of Commons. The Speaker of the Commons says, "I have a copy of the speech. Would you like me to read it to you, House of Commons"—or in our case, Legislature. Because the Legislature has just heard the speech, the Legislature says, "Dispense. We've already heard the speech. You don't need to read it again." What happened

this time? Someone from the NDP yelled out "No" and we had to have the speech read two times.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): It was Peter Kormos that did it.

Mrs Sandals: Was that who it was?

Interjections.

Mrs Sandals: Oh no, he was abusing the British parliamentary process.

We had the second version of the speech from the throne. What would normally happen, for the viewers, is we would have the tabling of Bill 1 and then we would have a motion that says, "We'll debate the throne speech on the next sessional day, the Monday following." What happened? Again, the NDP said no. So here we are tonight. We are having a debate on whether to have a debate on a throne speech that took place two or three weeks ago.

1850

In all the time that I've been a politician, I would never have gotten away with this silliness. If I had been a school board trustee and somebody had said, "Let's debate this; let's debate whether or not to debate," we would have gotten laughed out of town. But not here. Why are we in this mess? We are in this mess because the NDP lost two seats and they've been sulking, quite frankly, ever since. Because of that, we are in this situation tonight.

Now, I would dearly love to debate the throne speech, but to debate any further on whether or not we should have a debate to have a debate is a total waste of time, and that ends my comments.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): It is remarkable that this is being debated. I'm not aware of this ever happening. It certainly hasn't in the 15 years I've been here, and the real old guys who've been here can't remember it happening either.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Real old guys.

Mr Kormos: The real old ones, yes. They can't ever remember this happening. Look, I was hoping for the government to screw up a little bit, but in my wildest dreams, I didn't think they'd give me the entrée, the entry point, the opportunity, if you will, not only to have the—well, the throne speech, we knew, was going to be read twice. What did you think we were going to do? For Pete's sake, we weren't wearing our little choir uniforms. Those weren't halos you saw over our heads. What did you think we were going to do? Of course.

Was there any effort to circumvent that? Was there any effort on the part of the government House leader to display an amicable, amiable rapport with New Demo-

crats so as perhaps to avoid the sort of utilization of the rules by the New Democrats on that day? I don't recall one.

Perhaps I had messages on my phone that I neglected to pick up. Perhaps Mr Duncan had been calling me all day, saying, "Pete, I think we should sit down and talk." I don't know, because things were screwed up, of course, from the move. I know our e-mails got a little fouled up and stuff like that, but I'm pretty sure, because I didn't see any of those messages from the volunteers who take messages—because of course we have no caucus staff. It makes it a little more difficult, and that way, we've got to be more cautious. We've got to be careful we don't get hoodwinked by the government.

I don't want this caucus to be hoodwinked, right? To be bushwhacked? So then I've got to read the rules, and I've got to be hyper-cautious about ensuring that there is compliance. Otherwise, it could be a trick. We've got to be very careful about getting tricked by the government House leader. So just to be sure, we didn't want to give unanimous consent to dispense with the reading of the throne speech, to be sure, in case it was a trick.

You see, the sad thing is, this isn't the only motion of its sort. This is the second motion of its type. This is the cleanup motion for the first motion that the government House leader fouled up; sullied, if you will.

Well, he did. Don't tell me "sully" is not parliamentary, Ms Churley. We've gone far enough down that path already.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I didn't say a word.

Mr Kormos: Ah, but you gave me a look.

Ms Churley: One of those Churley looks.

Mr Kormos: Yeah, and you know how I characterize those looks.

Ms Churley: I do.

Mr Kormos: Yes.

So there we go. We've got the House leader wide open, defenceless.

Now please, folks, look. There are only four of us, so if people who want to go home, feel free. I don't want government backbenchers sitting here tonight thinking that maybe there's going to be hijinks or shenanigans from this side. There are only four of us. You people feel free to go home to your loved ones. There are only four of us. What could four people do? Look: one, two, three, four. Feel free, those of you—House duty night after night. Not only did you not get in cabinet; they're making you do House duty at night. Let the cabinet ministers who make the big bucks do the House duty in the evening.

In any event, this is the second motion of this type. The government House leader started motion number 1—

Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): Hey, I'm right here.

Mr Kormos: Howdy, ma'am. The government House leader, for some bizarre reason—

Ms Martel: Sandra's doing her House duty as well as that. Get that on the record. Put the rest of the cabinet to shame; Sandra's the only one here from the cabinet.

Mr Kormos: There's only one minister here: Ms Pupatello.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: Oh, it doesn't count when you're back there hiding behind the Speaker.

Ms Pupatello is putting her cabinet colleagues to shame. She has moxie, she's got spirit and she sticks with the program. Here she is, right in this Legislature, carrying House duty all by herself.

So then Mr Duncan, the government House leader, moves his motion. Again, didn't he know it was a debatable motion?

Ms Martel: Probably not.

Ms Churley: No, I don't think so.

Mr Kormos: Well, I don't know. I presume he has access to the same books I have access to.

It was Mr Hampton who leaned over and whispered, "Kormos, that's a debatable motion. I think you'd better muck up the works." Howard being the leader, and me being one of his acolytes—

Ms Martel: You're a sheep.

Mr Kormos: —that's right—I said, "Yes, leader. As asked, I will now proceed, as you've instructed, to muck up the works."

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): And lo and behold, it was a debatable motion.

Mr Kormos: But it wasn't a tough one. Sometimes you get confronted with tough ones, and sometimes they're easy ones. This one fell into our lap, so to speak.

So they start debating it. But then Mr Duncan, in his wisdom—because he's a careful, studied person, Mr Duncan is—moves adjournment of the debate. Right off the bat I said, "Whoops," because, at the very least, it would have required an amendment to that motion to clean it up, because of course it specified the date upon which we'd be debating the throne speech. But because he moved that the motion be adjourned, it was going to be adjourned to the date that the motion itself—

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: No, no, Rosario, please; there are only four of us here, because we're not playing any shenanigans.

Out of nowhere, Mr Marchese appears; he strolled in.

Ms Churley: You're becoming like the Liberals. You're becoming like the Liberals.

Mr Kormos: Fiberals.

In any event, he screwed up. So then he brings another motion. I, of course, brought a point of order—a rather feckless point of order, if you will, because, to be fair, even my own colleagues said, "Kormos, you ain't going to win this one." As a matter of fact, Howard Hampton, my leader, leaned over to me and said, "Kormos, you're not going to win this one; why are you even trying?" I said, "But Howard, who knows, what the heck, maybe we'll kill question period today." Because after all, when you're only eighth in question period and you have to stand up and ask for permission, question period really

doesn't mean that much to us. Heck, in the total scheme of things, if there's only one question and it's the eighth, I'm hard pressed to understand why New Democrats have any great sort of commitment to question period. Why? To listen to the fluff, the cotton candy stuff that comes out of government backbenchers? They're hardly questions. The problem is, they're not even members' statements, because the members don't write them. What it is are backbenchers being duped, usually by cabinet ministers who have been hard pressed to get a question.

Think about it. You're smiling. You've got the cabinet ministers who are begging for a question, pleading, "Please ask me, ask me." It was sort of like Grade 2 or 3, the old, "Oh, oh, over here, ask me." So what they do is they shanghai their backbenchers, convince them, "This is good for you. This is good exposure," and dissuade them from the fact that it's an incredible embarrassment to be asking sort of pat, especially when it's being documented on Hansard, especially when there are folks back home who are watching this who are saying, "My goodness. First of all, it sounds like a scripted question, and jeez, it seems as if the cabinet minister knew in advance what the question was going to be. What a waste of question period." People who have Liberal members say, "I thought our members told us about how they had such great access to cabinet and cabinet ministers. Why doesn't our member just go over and whisper into the cabinet minister's ear and get the answer then and there?"

1900

Hon Ms Papatello: On a point of order, Speaker: I was hoping that, since we're all riveted to the speaking going on this evening, we could ask the member for Niagara Centre to speak to the motion that's on the floor tonight.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. That's not a point of order. I think the member has to speak to the motion. He's aware of that.

Mr Kormos: I'm not challenging the Chair, but I think that's a pretty good point of order. I appreciate the minister's assistance and her support of me this evening. I want to tell the minister that when the occasion comes, I will have the same generosity of spirit toward her. I appreciate the minister's assistance in this regard, as she's quite right. She'll be speaking to this motion, which is a motion that has gotten pretty fouled up. The government actually time-allocated this motion. It gets worse, I say to the member who spoke before me, from—help—

Mr Hampton: Guelph-Wellington.

Mr Kormos: —From Guelph-Wellington. It gets worse, because you actually spent two days debating the time allocation motion that time-allocated this motion. You see? It doesn't get better; it gets worse.

Some people suggest that this is dilatory conduct. I suppose it is, but it's dilatory conduct on the part of the government House leader. Here's the government House leader, who sponsored legislation—these folks weren't even here two days before the government moved a motion to give everybody a three-month vacation—January, February, March. Unheard of. Down where I

come from I've got workers who work hard 52 weeks a year—hard pressed to get vacations. When they do have the smallest bit of vacation time, it isn't measured in months; it's hardly measured in weeks. More likely than not, it's measured in days.

Here at Queen's Park, where the minimum wage is \$85,000 and where the vast majority of members are well in excess of that—

Interjections.

Mr Kormos: They are.

Ms Churley: None of us.

Mr Kormos: Not New Democrats.

Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): Are you jealous?

Mr Kormos: Well, the minimum wage is \$85,000. When you start talking about committee chairs, you're talking about another \$12,000 or so. Deputy Speakers: another eight or nine grand. Parliamentary assistants: I think you're up to 20 grand. You're in the \$100,000 club, parliamentary assistants. Ministers, as I recall, it's another 30 Gs.

Mind you, it's still not quite the 27% salary increase that the Liberals and Conservatives voted for themselves that, catch this, Ernie Eves cancelled, not Premier McGuinty, in a failed pre-emptive effort to try to prop up Tory support in the pre-election period. Understand that the minimum wage here is 85 grand and cabinet ministers are up to around 105, and within two days of being here, this government moves a motion giving itself a three-month vacation.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: The Minister of Community and Social Services, whose riding is down Windsor way—the member for Windsor West is talking about Remo Mancini. Ms Papatello, why are you doing this? Remo called me last week and said, "Peter, why are you mentioning me in the Legislature?" I said, "Remo, relax. Do you realize how many years it's been since anybody has mentioned your name in the Legislature? To boot, Remo, nobody knew who you were other than Jim Bradley and Norm Sterling." And Remo said, "Well, don't call me a double-dipper." I said, "Remo, technically you may not be. You picked up your \$40,000-plus-a-year pension."

So now the member for Windsor West is bringing up Remo Mancini, provoking me after I told Remo that I was going to try very hard not to talk about him. I thought he was your friend, not mine. I mean, I knew him, but I never considered him a friend. We certainly aren't members of the same political party. So he's a little self-conscious, Remo is, about his double-dipping. I told him I'd try to avoid mentioning him, and here his good friend the Minister of Community and Social Services starts tossing his name around as if he didn't deserve some privacy as he double-dips.

Hon Ms Papatello: What's your pension payout? I'll be speaking shortly. I'll be making up for those.

Mr Kormos: Good; the minister's going to speak.

By gosh, we've got five members, so any of you who left, you'd better come back, because who knows what these five will do.

So here we are, we've got a time allocation motion tonight and then we've still got to get around to the throne speech. And of course there are statutory requirements—a standing order, at least—as to how many days. We've got six days to go on the throne speech—is that right?

Ms Churley: They can't time-allocate that one.

Mr Kormos: Well, we never can tell. What do they call those motions? The pact from the McGuinty-Eves pact motions; the axis.

Ms Churley: Double-speak.

Mr Kormos: Well, it is an axis. The McGuinty-Eves pact is doing these programming motions. You talk about two guys who obviously have been poring over dog-eared volumes of Kafka to come up with one of those things, but there we are, and with the concept of almost consensus. Did you hear the argument, "Oh, but Speaker, there's almost a consensus. Surely that's got to count for something"? A near consensus has got to count for a whole lot more. So here we've got the pact. We've got Eves and McGuinty collaborating, designing time allocation motions, and then we've got people who say, "We're not allowed to debate."

Well, gosh, the member for Guelph-Wellington said she'd give us more time to debate. Use your time to debate. Don't hide your light under a bushel. You've got 20 minutes. Lord knows, you don't get a whole lot of time to debate. Most evening sittings, your members are silenced by your whip. Your members are told, "You can't debate." Your members are silenced.

The Conservative caucus is here in full force. There's Mr Sterling. Maybe he's going to be the interim leader.

Ms Martel: Does he get more pay for that?

Mr Kormos: I don't know. He's there all alone. Here are the Conservatives who vote for these evening sittings, but they're never at them. The party is tomorrow night, by the way, Mr Sterling, not tonight. So if your colleagues told you they were gone to the party, they've sold you a bill of goods.

So here we are, this incredible exercise, the first time in this Legislature's history that a motion like this has ever been moved. This isn't the original motion to debate the throne speech; this is the motion to clean up the motion to debate the throne speech. It's the first time in history that this motion has ever been moved. Of course, it's the first time it's ever been debated. It's the first time it's ever been time-allocated. This is an occasion of firsts for—

Mr Hampton: For a House leader.

Mr Kormos: Well, your House leader is exceptional because he's managed to achieve so many firsts in one fell swoop. There are records kept of this sort of thing and there will be an acknowledgement of it, I'm sure, somewhere, somehow, perhaps.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: Who knows where it will be recorded or documented? I'll certainly never forget it. It's one of those things that's burned into my memory. It's ineradicable. It was unique; it was special. We sit over here looking for opportunities for this government to show

that its level of organization is less than what it would want the public out there to believe, and all of sudden, it's like manna. All of a sudden it's gifts. It's gift after gift after gift.

I'm eager to hear what my colleagues have to say about this motion. I know they are anxious to speak to it. They're chomping at the bit, so to speak, if that kind of terminology isn't inappropriate. We've got horse people down where I come from. We've got race tracks and horse farmers, so chomping at the bit is something we're inclined to do. It's a good thing.

Mr Marchese from Trinity-Spadina is anxious to debate this. He wants to, in a very serious manner, analyze this motion, and will undoubtedly be speaking more directly to the motion than I've managed to.

1910

I know Shelley Martel from Nickel Belt is equally anxious. We tried to send her home but she insisted that she be here. She said, "No way. My kids—heck, I can see them tomorrow morning. I want to be here tonight to debate this motion." The leader said, "No, if Shelley's going TO stay, I'm going to stay too."

Then Ms Churley-NDP said, "I want to debate this more than any of the rest of you want to debate this, because I have things to say that are unique, that nobody else could ever say about this motion." I said to Ms Churley-NDP, "Are you sure? Have you really figured this out and thought it out well?" She said, "I've never been more sure of anything in my life, Kormos." I said, "Well, Ms Churley-NDP, then feel free to lend your unique, novel perspective to this. The folks out in the Danforth there are going to be anxious to see you speak to that." Unfortunately, it won't be until around 10 o'clock tonight, give or take, or maybe 10:30 or 11. She's going to try to get it on before 12.

I thank you kindly for your incredible patience, Speaker. I really appreciate this opportunity.

Mr Hampton: Since government members aren't debating and I gather Conservative members aren't debating, I certainly want to take part in this debate, because this motion and how this motion was arrived at is, I think, instructive for all of us.

The reality is that this place needs rules to run, but there's another reality, and that is, no matter how you may tailor the rules, the rules can be used by everyone.

In my time in the Legislature—I think back to 1988-89 when New Democrats rang the bells for a while. Immediately afterwards, the Liberals introduced changes to the rules so that you couldn't ring the bells.

I remember when the Conservatives were over here as third party—I believe it was in 1991 or 1992—the leader of the then third party, Mike Harris, read into the record the names of all the lakes and rivers in Ontario. Of course, it was a delay tactic. It was a tactic of an opposition that only had, I think, 16 or 17 members at the time. It was their way of drawing public attention to something the government was doing which they thought was unpopular and wrong. I remember, after that, we, as the government then, New Democrats, amended the rules so you couldn't read in the names of lakes and rivers.

Hon Ms Pupatello: Those weren't the only rules you amended.

Mr Hampton: We amended those, yes.

Then I fast-forward to, I guess it was, 1996, when the Conservatives announced that they were going to force municipal amalgamation on cities like Toronto and Hamilton and Ottawa and Sudbury and the new city of Kawartha Lakes. There was a vote held in Toronto, where over 76% of the people in a referendum voted against amalgamation.

I remember the Conservatives brought forward their legislation and they weren't careful. We were able to get that legislation into committee of the whole and we were able to introduce 12,000 amendments. The only way they could deal with the amendments was either to sit down and make an agreement about what was going to happen and what wasn't going to happen, or sit here night and day while the 12,000 amendments were read.

After that, the Conservatives changed the rules and made it even more difficult for the opposition. I note that when the Attorney General gave his speech the other day, what did he mention? He mentioned changing the rules again—in other words, making it even more difficult for the opposition.

I come back to my original point: This place needs rules to run. But the reality is, no matter how you make the rules, the rules can be used by both sides. They can be used by the government and they can be used by the opposition. What works best around here is when we don't try to hard-line the rules, when we try to seek accommodation. We've been trying to seek some accommodation with your government for some time. For a parliamentary democracy to work well, you need to have effective opposition parties. That is especially true when you have a very large government majority. For a parliamentary democracy to work well, government gets to make their decisions in secret, in cabinet. They then take the results of those decisions in the form of proposed legislation that you bring here. But the opposition gets to question it, and the opposition parties need the resources so they can handle the press. You know, care and feeding of the press is a very important thing around here, being able to know what the press is interested in, what they want to hear about, what they think isn't important—being able to do some research.

We've been trying to reach an accommodation with your government for some time. We tried to open a discussion with your House leader and your Premier before the House ever sat. We were told, "No, the rules are the rules." So how did we get here? If the rules are the rules, the rules can be used by both sides. The rules say that the throne speech in fact is supposed to be read twice, is supposed to be read once by the representative of the Queen or King, but under ancient parliamentary tradition, the King or Queen is not allowed to tell us what to do. Therefore, the rules say that the Speaker, our elected Speaker, must read the throne speech. If we're not going to go rule by rule, you can dispense with the Speaker reading the throne speech. But it was your Premier and your House leader who said, "The rules are the rules.

We're going to go strictly by the rules." If you go strictly by the rules, the throne speech will be read twice. And if you go strictly by the rules, when your House leader makes not one mistake following the reading of the throne speech but two mistakes and literally puts your government in a position where he has brought forward a motion that leads nowhere—that's what he did, brought forward a motion that literally leads nowhere—of course we're going to quote back to you, "The rules are the rules."

We don't like operating this way. We recognize that this institution, this place, has an important job to do for the people of Ontario. But part of that important job is that you get to make the decisions, the opposition parties get to ask questions—and we have sufficient resources so that we can do a good job of asking questions. The Premier and your House leader don't want that to happen. So then you get stuck with, "The rules are the rules." The only way you've found to get yourself out of the mistakes that your House leader made was to bring in—you may call it a programming motion, but in fact it is the most restrictive closure motion I've seen in the 16½ years I've been in this Legislature. It is the most anti-democratic closure motion I've ever experienced. It's bizarre. I hear the Attorney General get up and give this long-winded speech about democratic renewal, but I see you bring a closure motion that is the most antidemocratic I've ever seen, that imposes closure on bills that haven't been debated long enough to qualify for the closure section or the time allocation section of our rules of the Legislature.

If you think you can operate the House by means of those kinds of closure motions—you may call it a programming motion to avoid the embarrassment that it's really a closure motion—if you think you can run the House that way, sometimes you'll be able to. But let me tell you, if the way you want to run the Legislature is to hard-line it all the time and say, "The rules are the rules and we're going to strictly use the rules to smash you, or strictly use the rules to limit what you can do," then recognize that the rules can also be used by the opposition party. The rules will lead you, as they have tonight, into a bizarre result.

1920

Your House leader, on the day of the throne speech, didn't mess up once; he messed up twice, and now the only way he can think of to get himself out of the never-never land that he put himself in is to bring this very antidemocratic closure motion and then have to engage in the discussion we're having tonight.

You know what I'd rather be discussing? I'd rather be discussing how many questions and how they should be allocated to the two opposition parties so that we can ask the effective questions that need to be asked. Question period ought to be about good, hard-edged opposition questions and good answers by cabinet ministers, not fluff-ball stuff. The media is embarrassed by our question periods now. They're writing about how they're embarrassed by our question periods. They're embarrassed

by the fact that we're not getting those kinds of good questions that demand accountability, that demand responsibility of the government.

I'd rather be talking about what kind of budget is necessary to make sure that we can ask effective questions that raise the issues the people out there want to see raised, effective questions that will allow us to make proposals about how legislation can be improved—or perhaps that some kinds of legislation should be removed. That's what should be going on here. But you need to recognize it is your government that got you here tonight and it's your government that refuses to hold those kinds of meaningful discussions so that we can actually get on to doing the business, the work of the people, more effectively, more efficiently and more meaningfully.

Will we have other nights like tonight? I suspect we will if your House leader continues to have the attitude, "The rules are the rules. We're going to interpret them strictly. We're going to interpret them harshly." When he does that, he leaves us no choice.

One of the realities of being in opposition is that the government always has a majority. At the end of the day, the government will get their way. But as an opposition party, you use the rules sometimes to delay, sometimes to be able to do as we're doing here tonight, raise the real issue that's at the heart of this debate—and the real issue at the heart of this debate is that I recognize we don't have official party status, but that does not mean your voice doesn't count. It shouldn't mean that the government can then say, "Oh, you have no rights in the Legislature." It shouldn't mean that.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): We haven't said that.

Mr Hampton: Read the letters that your House leader has been sending over. Read them and look at them.

It seems to me that if the government wanted to find a resolution to this, all the government House leader had to do was say, "Look, we need to talk. We need to have a discussion." Has the government House leader done that? No. Has the government House leader shown the willingness to have this discussion around any of these issues? No. It's the government House leader who continues to insist that the rules are the rules and they're going to be applied strictly and they're going to be applied stringently and they're going to be applied however the government wants to force its way, even if it's quite antidemocratic, even if it involves a closure motion, which is the most restrictive and the most antidemocratic I've ever seen in my time in the Legislature.

I wish we weren't here debating this motion. I do. I wish we were not here debating this motion. I wish we were, for example, debating the need for more construction site inspectors so that—

Mr McMeekin: Let's do that.

Mr Hampton: Why don't we? Because you've got a government House leader who doesn't even want those issues to get on the agenda; that's why.

I'd rather be here tonight discussing what is the government's hydroelectric policy, because I can't figure it out, and no one can. I suggest none of you can. Because when I look at it over a two- or a two-and-a-half-year period, it's been on just about every point on the spectrum. One day Dalton McGuinty's all in favour of privatization of generation and transmission and he's in favour of deregulation, and then a week later he's not sure about that, then you get a letter going out to the Bay Street investment community saying, "Oh yes, Liberals are in favour of that." I'd rather be here determining exactly what is your hydro policy, because literally hundreds of thousands of jobs in this province depend on it, and whether people will freeze in the dark or not depends on it and, to a large extent, the environmental future of the province depends on it. If we had a government House leader who didn't take the position that the rules are the rules, we could get into some of those fruitful debates.

I'd actually like to be talking about, for example, what it is going to take for us to properly and adequately look after our seniors, many of whom are in long-term-care facilities where they are not being properly and adequately cared for. We've got a government House leader who says, "No. The rules are the rules, and we're going to interpret the rules stringently and strictly, and if that means that you don't get to ask questions about those things and raise those important issues, so be it."

What's at the heart of this debate? The reason we're here debating this motion today is because we've got—and I've seen this before. I remember when you people were elected in 1995. I remember some of your members coming to the House—in fact, I remember Mr Flaherty in private members' hour. He brought a private member's bill that would have had the effect of docking the pay of any member who was ever thrown out of the House. From time to time, the Speaker has to eject a member of the House. It was really quite draconian. I remember that 12 of us stood, and when it came time to vote on the private member's bill—and the effect of 12 of us standing is that it doesn't get voted on. If 12 members stand in opposition to a private member's bill, you can prevent it from being voted on. I remember how angry he was that day. He came over to me and he was fuming, and I said, "Jim, read the rules. Read the rules. We're simply using the rules that are put there."

Ms Churley: For a good reason.

Mr Hampton: For a good reason. So I say to the government members, you can try to hardball it. You may beat us down. You can try to hardball it and you can try to run over us, and you may succeed in that for a while, but let me tell you, there will come a night when you want something passed and you need it passed, or you need something done, or you think it's really important for your agenda, and all of a sudden it doesn't happen. Somebody will stand up and say, "The rules are the rules."

Mr McMeekin: Is that ever silly.

Mr Hampton: We don't want to engage in those tactics. I would much rather operate in terms of unanimous consents, in terms of finding consensus and agree-

ment, but as long as your position continues to be, “The rules are the rules, and we’re going to apply them in a very hard-edged way, in a very stringent and restrictive way,” you can end up in these situations. They are the situations of your own making. Nobody twisted your government House leader’s arm on the day of the reading of the throne speech. No one said to him that he had to bring the motion that he did. He was worried that we might do something and, as a result, he brought a motion that was, frankly, very unwise, and then, realizing he’d brought a motion that was very unwise, he tried to rescue it by means of another motion, which got him even deeper into the dark hole.

1930

I’d just say to you, that’s not a good way to run a Legislature. It’s not. You have a huge majority. To try to use that large majority to always force your way—the seating plan is another example. It’s really quite insulting. I heard the Speaker’s decision, but you realize that the three Legislatures he referred to try to justify the position you’re taking—in British Columbia, Quebec and now in Ontario—the Legislatures that he referred to try to justify the seating plan are other Legislatures where there’s a large Liberal majority that is trying to silence the opposition parties. In Quebec, even though the ADQ got 18% of the vote, Jean Charest is now trying to make the ADQ disappear, employing many of the same tactics that you’re employing, and employing the same tactics with respect to the seating plan. In British Columbia, where the Liberals have a huge, overwhelming majority, once again it’s that Liberal majority that is trying to implement the same tactic.

I say to you, it’s very unbecoming. It’s going to hurt you, the more the public perceives that a large Liberal majority is simply trying to force its way. And when you try to force your way, these are the conundrums you get into. This is the conundrum your House leader got you into on throne speech day.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate on the motion?

Applause.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Please, please. I might criticize you.

I’m happy to take this opportunity to speak because, I’ve got to tell you, we don’t have that many opportunities. So I grasp each and every opportunity possible to speak to any motion before us. I am doing what Jim Bradley loved to do here for eight years. I’m not sure, but Jim Bradley, the now Minister of Tourism—you remember?—never missed an opportunity to speak. Never. You remember, he would be here or not here, but if he weren’t here, he would be watching television and run in to get his five minutes.

Mr Kormos: He’d drive back from St Catharines.

Mr Marchese: If he was in St Catharines, he’d drive right back; quite right. Jim loved this place. He lived here.

Mr McMeekin: Still does.

Mr Marchese: Still does. And, member from Ancaster-Dundas, Jim used to love to come and debate, particularly closure motions. Do you remember that? I

remember that. He loved closure motions, because he wanted to stand up and excoriate the government for introducing time closure motions, because he felt—and I agreed—that closure motions strangled debate, suffocated debate, prevented the ongoing debate of issues, no matter what. He was opposed to them, each and every time, and boy, was he upset when somebody else wouldn’t let him speak. You could tell.

Interjection: Even his own House leader.

Mr Marchese: His House leader, others, I just don’t know, but you could tell when he was visibly upset, that he ran to speak and somebody bumped him off because they wanted to knock him out of the speaking order. Jim, he was loyal, faithful, tough, and tough against the government.

Ms Churley: The member for St Catharines.

Mr Marchese: St Catharines. What did I say?

Ms Churley: His name.

Mr Marchese: Of course. I usually say, “the now Minister of Tourism.” We were buddies once. Boy, we were so close for eight years, we knew each other’s speeches. I had them memorized. And I’m sure he memorized ours. It surprises me how quickly he forgot where he came from. You forget your roots, you forget your culture, you forget where you came from.

Ms Martel: You forget the past.

Mr Marchese: And you want to forget the past. I know that the member from Ancaster-Dundas wants to forget the past. I know he does, because I see him chipper every now and then and engaging and—boy, is he engaged. I never used to remember him so engaged as I see him now. I like that; don’t get me wrong. I think it’s good. It’s good to see members actively engaged, one way or the other. I think it’s good for democracy and debate in this place. For me, debating time allocation motions, which this one is, is important to do. It’s time-allocated. We’ll get to the other programming motion in a moment. In terms of closure motions, time-allocated motions, they’re all in the same league. I remember Jim very well, I remember the members for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough, Hamilton East, St Catharines, Windsor West, and Toronto Centre-Rosedale—all of them—speaking against the rule changes that were making it very difficult for us to participate.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: No, no, member for Ancaster, I remember you well. I remember all of the Liberals well. Each and every time there was a rule change, Liberals were on their feet decrying and attacking it, as well they should and as well they did. We were supportive of each other in that endeavour.

Mr McMeekin: Work with us.

Mr Marchese: We’re trying to work with you. The problem is that you don’t want to work with us. The member from Ancaster says, “Let’s debate those issues,” and, “Work with us.” We’re trying. The problem is that you want to shut out the NDP completely. That’s not working with us. You understand the game, right? When you say, “Work with us,” what you’re saying is, “Let us, as a political party, as a governing party, do what we

want to do. And whether New Democrats participate or not is irrelevant.” Do you understand?

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: I’m not understanding what you’re saying. I’ve got to tell you, in the same way I want to take the time to be able to communicate my ideas, we encourage each and every one of you to do the same. And don’t just take two minutes to express yourselves; take the whole 20, because you have so much to say. One Liberal spoke: the member for Guelph-Wellington. I think she spoke for about five or six minutes. Something like that, in that area more or less. I suppose she’s probably saying, “I communicated what I needed to and that was enough.” That’s fair enough. Some people are succinct—

Mrs Sandals: Sometimes I’m very brief. At other times, I’m very long.

Mr Marchese: You’re quite right: You were very concise.

Member from Ancaster, you could do the same. Stand up and take five minutes. Talk to us and tell us why—

Mr McMeekin: I’ve debated this one already.

Mr Marchese: Oh, no, you didn’t. Then debate it again because I didn’t hear it, obviously. If you did, I didn’t hear it.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: You understand, member for Guelph-Wellington, we need the member to stand up and tell us why he wants to work with us, why he wants to debate certain bills, why we might not be part of it and what you’re willing to do to change that. Member from Ancaster, when you introduced the co-called programming motion—by the way, it’s a euphemism for closure; you understand that, right? Because the people out there, what are they to know? “Programming motion”? It sounds like a nice idea. It’s like you’re putting forth a program and you’re going to debate and talk about it. It seems neat. It’s a closure motion. Folks who are watching this political channel—it’s now 20 to 8—the programming motion is a euphemism for closure—and worse, as our leader indicated.

This motion allows less time for debate on government bills and motions that have been introduced than the Tories have done previously. In the past, under the Tories, we were at least allowed to debate for three days. Then they would introduce a closure motion and we’d have another debate on that. At least we had that. The so-called programming motion gives us less time for debate. This from a Liberal government that so short a while ago was there on the opposition benches decrying those types of closure motions. So the problem we had was that you went with the Tories, made a deal and said, “The two parties that have status here have made a deal. The third party doesn’t count.” Does that sound fair to you, member from Ancaster, Flamborough and all the other parts that you represent?

Mr McMeekin: It sounds to me like you’re wasting everyone’s time.

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Mr Marchese: But does it sound fair to you? And you’re a fair man, because you used to work for a New Democrat once. I suspect there is some modicum of fairness. I know it’s in your bones somewhere. I know that you don’t think it’s a fair thing that you would secretly go with the Conservatives, strike a deal, shut us out and then say, “We got the other party that’s got status.”

Just admit, stand up in the five minutes and say, “We don’t want to give the New Democrats status.” Just stand up and admit why it is that you wouldn’t want the New Democrats to have any form of status: because in your mind it’s wonderful to have New Democrats not being able to participate in the way they did. Imagine the glory in this place. Your magical moment is to have Tories ask you questions and limit the number of times New Democrats would ask you questions. You know that. That’s what you love to do.

You see, citizens of Ontario watching this political forum, they don’t want New Democrats to ask questions. They don’t want our leader to have two lead questions. They certainly don’t want any other members of the New Democratic Party to ask any more questions than they have to. So what we are getting at the moment is one question once a day where the leader has to subject himself, submit himself to the Chair and to the other caucuses, to ask for permission to speak. Then the House leaders and the others say, “It’s OK, Howard, you can ask the question.” By the grace of the members every day, our leader, begging to ask a question, gets to ask a question.

Member from Ancaster, I know you don’t think it’s fair or right and/or reasonable. If you do, you never had any New Democratic connection to the person you had worked with in the past. I suspect you have some—always hidden away, tightly kept in your chest. The fact of the matter is, we play by the rules so as to allow 15% of the electorate—close to one million people who elected us—the opportunity to hear New Democrats debate issues of importance to us, and of importance to them; 15% of the electorate is a lot of people. This is not a private game. This is not an interest that is personally mine. I don’t stand here in this place speaking in order to amuse myself, or to amuse other New Democrats who are quickly running away anyway. I am here debating on behalf of close to a million people who supported us, because they want to listen to and hear New Democrats.

The member from Ancaster says, “Why don’t you have status?” How easily he forgets that when he was there in that campaign, urging New Democrats to vote for him and others so they could get rid of the Tories, he didn’t mind getting New Democratic votes on the so-called strategic voting style. “Get rid of the Tories. Vote for Liberals. Don’t waste your vote on the NDP.” You didn’t mind New Democratic votes then, did you? You loved them then, didn’t you?

Mr Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): They did the right thing.

Mr Marchese: Oh, sure, they did the right thing. But no New Democrat or left-leaning Liberal who voted for you folk ever dreamed that New Democrats wouldn't have the opportunity to stand in this place and ask the required questions that would give us and them the democracy they deserve—no one. I am convinced there's not one single New Democrat who, had they known that by voting for you we could lose a seat and not have status, would have voted for you. You don't mind sucking away their votes before an election, but after the election you ask, "Why didn't you get status? We won and you didn't. Them is the rules." That's the way you would put it.

I remind you: Rules change, governments change, we change, Liberals change—

Mr McMeekin: I give up.

Mr Marchese: You give up? You should—because when the Liberals were in power they changed the rules, when New Democrats were in power we changed the rules, when Tories were in power they changed the rules. Now we are starting the cycle again. I am telling you, each and every time we've changed the rules, we've made it tougher and tougher for us to deal with each other fairly. Each time you change the rules you make it tougher for the opposition parties, in this case New Democrats, to co-operate in the way you would love us to co-operate. Each time you tighten the rules you force us to find ways for New Democrats to be heard. I know you don't like it. I know your intention is simply to do what you want to do, but your programming motion is something we haven't seen in this place yet.

For you Liberals to have attacked for eight years closure motions introduced by the Tories countless times, innumerable times, for you to do what you decried for eight years is, in my view, a pitiful, shameful act. I understand it, but I disagree so profoundly with what you've done. I believe it's a serious mistake.

The fact of the matter is, you want us to play by the rules set by you. We don't believe unilateral games or rules set by one player are fair. They're not fair. When you do not allow the other party to engage you in the way they should, it's not right. When you resist the desire and/or interest for our leader to stand up in this place and ask questions, we think you are wrong.

Frankly, I believe the people of Ontario, those who are watching—because I tell you, the member for Nepean-Carleton once said here, "Look, not one constituent in my area ever talked about the rule changes or closure motions," and he's probably right. That doesn't make it right. The fact that many people out there may not be following the rules of this Legislature or understand what we're doing doesn't make it right. There are a lot of people who follow the electoral process; there are many who follow what we do. I am convinced that many of your own supporters don't like what you've done and don't like what you're doing.

So if you want to be able to have New Democrats participating in this place in the way that you would like us, if you want us to be able to co-operate with you, it's something that has to be mutually worked at. We both

have to work at giving and taking. I don't see that. We don't see that.

Mr McMeekin: You need to work at it.

Mr Marchese: We need to—

Mr McMeekin: You need to work at it. This isn't working at it.

Mr Marchese: No, I'm saying that one party alone cannot resolve a matter. Mediation happens between two people, usually, and a mediator usually has to be there. But in this case, we cannot solve this alone. I'm sorry. We can't surrender our role here as parliamentarians and wait for you to decide, by your grace or magnanimity, what it is that you will offer us or not. We can't do that.

We've had very few gestures from your House leader in this regard that would speak to what it is your government, your caucus, is willing to work with New Democrats on that would allow us in a way to get the fairness we deserve and the voice we need in order to be able to represent 15% of the electorate out there that at the moment are shut out. At the moment they are shut out. You're not just shutting me out when you do that. You're not just shutting out our seven New Democrats when you do that. You are shutting out 15% of the electorate that is desperately looking for a voice, and that voice isn't coming from the Conservatives, and that voice is not coming from Liberals. It will never come from Liberals and, generally speaking, it will never come from Tories. From time to time, it can come from Liberals. From time to time, it does. It's rare and far between.

I've got to tell you, we've got to see how this agenda will unfold in the next four years. Many promises were made by the Liberals; I'm not sure how many they will keep. Some of them have argued, "It takes a tough leader to be able to break promises." I'm telling you, it doesn't take a tough leader to break promises; anybody can do that. What's tougher is saying what you believe in before an election and then keeping those promises. If you believe you can't keep those promises, then you should not make them. This government has made promises they knew they could not keep. The rate cap was a promise they knew they couldn't keep. The hydro rate cap was costing us \$700 million or \$800 million a year. It was a promise that was expensive. It was money that was not on the books, but it was too expensive for us not to deal with. The Liberals said, "We'll keep it until 2006"; it was wrong. It doesn't take much of a tough leader to say that before an election, but it does take a tough leader to keep that promise.

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Now the Liberals are arguing, "We've got a tough leader, someone who's responsible, someone who's going to be able to break promises, because it takes a tough man to do that." No, it doesn't. I'm telling you, it doesn't. You're going to have to deal with that. You're going to have to deal with the electorate. That's something we will hold you accountable to, because that's our job. It is the job of the opposition parties to keep governments accountable. They cannot keep themselves accountable; they cannot do that. It is the job of citizens

of Ontario, in conjunction and in collaboration with opposition parties, that we hold governments accountable, no matter who they are. In this case and at this time, it's the Liberals.

We will use the rules when we have to, to make sure our voices are heard. There's simply no other way we can do that. This government is not allowing us that and, until they come and make a proposal that's fair, that we can live with, that fairly represents those who voted for us and including many who didn't—until that happens, we will simply not be able to get along in the way that we would like to.

Some of these issues could have been easily dealt with, but they have prevented us from doing it. I hope it will change.

Ms Martel: I'm going to begin tonight by noting that my three colleagues who have spoken before, and two more who will speak, have, I think, articulated very clearly how we have found ourselves in this situation tonight, but I think it's probably worthwhile for me just to repeat it one more time.

The motion we have before us, the government motion, is a motion that the government House leader had to bring forward to fix two mistakes he made with respect to the throne speech. So for those Liberal members who argue we should be talking about other things tonight and we shouldn't be dealing with this, I've got to remind you that we are because of two procedural mistakes made by your own House leader. So we're here as a consequence of his actions.

Secondly, we're here dealing with a motion that is part of a broader government closure motion, and a fair bit has been said about that. But it is worth repeating that it truly is the most regressive and restrictive closure motion that I have seen in my 16-and-some years in this place. It is the most regressive and the most restrictive because, unlike other time allocation motions that have been brought in this place, it was not restricted to timing or ending the debate with respect to only one government bill. The fact of the matter is, the time allocation motion brought by the government House leader restricts debate and committee and third reading debate and sets the timing for votes on three government bills, one of which had not even reached the maximum time for debate that would be normal before a time allocation motion is brought; three government bills, one opposition date motion, which will be dealt with tomorrow, and two other government notices of motion.

So it was a broad sweep of many of the things the government wanted to get done, but that broad sweep has made it absolutely the most regressive and restrictive time allocation motion that I have seen in my years here. The Liberals under Peterson brought forward nothing like it. When we were in government, there was nothing like that brought forward. Even when your party, Speaker, was in government—and I disagreed strongly with omnibus bills and time allocation motions like Bill 26—even you and your government never brought forward anything like this.

Within less than two weeks of this House sitting, we see a government bring forward a tremendously restrictive motion—the same party now in government that, when they were on this side, in opposition, would rail against the government time allocation motions or government closure motions. And those were time allocation motions on only single bills—not three bills, including one opposition day and two more government notices of motion.

We're here tonight because of two mistakes your own government House leader made and because we are dealing with the fallout from a very restrictive, regressive time allocation motion that was brought forward by the government House leader—with the full consent, I might add, of the Conservative Party.

I guess that will be the new order of business in this Legislature. I would remind members that what goes around comes around, and there will be a day when you will very much regret that you moved this motion and that your Speaker accepted it, because you will find yourself on the receiving end of the government deciding to shut down debate, shut down public hearings, shut down the moving of amendments—shutting down voting. You will regret that when what goes around comes around to you.

The motion before us has to do with the throne speech, which was read twice—which, by the rules, should be read twice. If the government wants to live by the rules, then we will live by the rules. The government might not like that from time to time, because those rules work two ways, as the government is finding out.

This motion deals with calling the throne speech for debate, and six days of debate are going to have to occur when we actually finally start that debate, unless of course somebody in the chair decides that we can throw out the Legislative Assembly Act and the law and curtail that debate too.

When we do start the debate on the throne speech, I will be very interested to hear the rationale from government members about why they are now beating such a hasty retreat away from their election promises. What was interesting about hearing the throne speech twice is that it reinforced for me just how quickly, how rapidly, how profoundly the government is now trying to get away from the 231 election promises it made, because it was very clear, as you looked at the details, limited as they were, in the throne speech, that the government had neither a timetable nor a specific commitment to some of those many, many promises they made during the election campaign.

What I saw was a government that is going to try and use the \$5.6-billion deficit that they pretend they knew nothing about as the excuse for not being able to meet those promises. Many of those promises will not be kept, because as the government looks to cut \$4 billion from its expenditures, many of those cuts will come at the expense of education and health care and community services. Many of the promises regarding nurses and the recruitment of new physicians and the establishment of new community health centres and the implementation of

the Kimberley Rogers inquest etc will be lost as well, because with a \$4-billion cut in public expenditures there won't be the money available to deal with the promises that were made.

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I'll be interested to hear from the government why it is that the throne speech said nothing about the promise that was specifically made by the Liberal Party to hire 8,000 nurses. I suspect many nurses in the province of Ontario voted for the Liberal Party because they believed that new hiring would occur and they believed the Liberals when they promised there would be a move to ensure that 70% of all nurses working in the province would be working full-time in hospital or community-based care. Wasn't it strange that there was no reference whatsoever to the hiring of those 8,000 nurses—when, the timetable, what the allocation would be, if it would be in the hospital sector or the home care sector or the long-term-care sector or all three. The government had nothing to say. I'll be interested to hear from the government why they had nothing to say about that very specific promise.

I'll be interested to hear from the government why nothing has been done to end the discrimination against autistic children aged six who need IBI treatment. Again, this was a very specific promise made by this government to families in Ontario who have autistic children. It was made very specifically in a letter from Mr McGuinty to a parent of an autistic child who will turn age six in the next year and who will be cut off IBI treatment if nothing is done to end that discrimination. I think that promise was made because in the last 18 months I have raised that very same issue in this House. I have had families in this gallery who have been directly affected. We have seen the desperate personal financial situation of so many families who are trying to pay for IBI treatment themselves. I think that as a consequence of that very public matter, and because most progressive members believe that discrimination is wrong, the Liberals made a very specific promise.

That letter was sent far and wide to the autism e-mail list, I can tell you, because I'm part of that list. I noted with a great deal of surprise that not one word was said about autistic children in the throne speech, not one word about making good on the government promise to end the discrimination against autistic children aged six who need IBI. Not only was there nothing said about that; there was nothing said about dealing with those hundreds of other autistic children who are not aged six yet who are desperately in need of this treatment, who are languishing on waiting lists, who will turn age six before they ever get a single second of treatment. I hope the minister responsible for children's issues will be in her place telling us why nothing was said in the throne speech about the government's promise on autistic children.

I look forward to hearing why there was nothing in the throne speech about the promise made by this government, not only during the election but before the election, on a number of occasions, that the government would cancel the private MRI and CAT scan clinics that were

put in place, the request for proposals that went out under your government, Speaker. We recognize that money that should go into patient care goes into the profit line in private, for-profit MRI and CAT scan clinics. We also recognize, and it was highlighted by the Minister of Community and Social Services, before she was the minister, that establishment of these very same clinics is leading to a poaching of radiologists in the public hospital system. She raised that in the media before the election. She was right. She would still be right if she were raising it now. But the Liberals didn't raise it in the throne speech. There was a lot of talk about the slow creeping of privatization in the throne speech, but on something as concrete as for-profit, private MRI and CAT scan clinics and shutting them down to stop the creeping privatization of health care, the government was silent. The government is still silent on that issue of when we're going to ensure that they're shut down and that MRIs and CAT scans go in to publicly funded, publicly administered hospitals in the province of Ontario.

I'm going to be waiting to hear why it is that the government said nothing in the throne speech about care for seniors and the disabled in long-term-care facilities, or said nothing, for example, about reversing the fee increase for seniors living in long-term-care facilities that was imposed by the former Conservative government. You see, both of those promises were made in the Liberal health platform for the election. In fact the Liberal health platform for the election says very specifically: "Cancel the Harris-Eves 15% increase in nursing home fees." It says very specifically: "Set high standards for our nursing homes and regularly inspect them to make sure those standards are being met."

You know, if the government was serious about doing those two things—because, after all, thousands and thousands and thousands of seniors and the disabled live in long-term-care facilities, and thousands and thousands of them are affected by a lack of standards and have been affected by the fee increase—I would have thought there would have been some mention in the throne speech of what the government was going to do with respect to those very same seniors. I would have expected that the government in the throne speech, if it meant what it said, would have come forward in that same document and said, "That is an end. There is now an end to that three-year fee increase imposed by the previous government," a 15% fee hike that was well above what would have been allowed in the private rental market in Ontario if that legislation applied to long-term care facilities. They would have sent a clear signal to seniors that we recognize that you are on low income and that it is expensive to stay in long-term-care facilities, and we will ensure that there is an end, that those fee hikes are eliminated and that can be money that goes back into your pockets. The government was silent.

The more difficult one for me, I guess, in the context of the series with respect to seniors and long-term-care facilities that has been underway in the paper lately, was to appreciate that the government said absolutely nothing about what progressive steps it's going to take to ensure

that there is high quality care for seniors and the disabled living in long-term-care facilities. But the government didn't come forward and say that there will be standards in very short order to ensure the quality of care of seniors who are living in our long-term-care facilities.

The government had nothing to say in the throne speech that we heard most recently, but the minister had a lot to say just a couple of days ago when he was interviewed by the *Toronto Star*. The minister got up and said, "We're going to have a revolution in long-term care. We're going to make sure that we fix the problem that's going on." The newspaper reports that he cried when he was told about the very dramatic and very terrible situation that faced a number of seniors and was reported on. You know what? We don't really need the minister's tears; we need some action.

He doesn't even have to wait to bring in amendments to the Long-Term Care Act because much of what was promised in the Liberal election platform can be done by regulation. He could go to cabinet tomorrow—because cabinet normally meets on Wednesday—and he could move regulations like that to improve standards of care in long-term-care facilities. He could go to cabinet tomorrow and he could determine that there will be minimum standards of care per resident per day in long-term-care facilities. There used to be, under our government, a regulation that said 2.25 hours of hands-on nursing care per resident per day. The Conservatives got away from that. They tore up that regulation. If the minister wanted to do something, some concrete action, he could bring forward that regulation tomorrow. He could bring forward a regulation tomorrow that said, "There will be three baths a week for people who live in long-term-care facilities," because we know there used to be a regulation in place and the Conservative government got rid of that. So there isn't even a standard in place with respect to how many baths a week the disabled and seniors in long-term-care facilities are supposed to have. He doesn't need legislation for that; he could pass it as a regulation tomorrow.

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He could pass a regulation tomorrow at cabinet that would say there has to be a registered nurse in all long-term-care facilities 24 hours a day, seven days a week, a regulation that used to be in place and was cancelled by the Conservative government. He could go to cabinet tomorrow and put forward a regulation that would say that all of the complaints and all of the infractions and all of the orders against individual nursing homes and long-term-care facilities will be posted in a public place so people can know what the track record is of the long-term-care facility that they want to put their mom or dad in. He could do that tomorrow without any legislation.

But you know what? It's telling, because there was no mention of that in the throne speech, despite the promise that was made. So you've really got to wonder about the commitment of this government to seniors and the frail and elderly in long-term-care facilities when there was absolutely no mention of what the government intended to do in this regard.

It will be interesting to hear the Liberals try to defend in the throne speech why so many of the promises they made didn't make the cut in the throne speech at all, weren't referenced, weren't talked about, weren't highlighted, weren't reinforced, weren't mentioned at all. I look forward to that debate when it comes, but I remind the members that the reason we're here tonight is because of two mistakes your own government House leader made on the day of the throne speech. That's why we're here tonight; that's why we're debating the motion that we are tonight.

Ms Churley: I'm happy to have a chance to participate in this debate tonight, but I was waiting for some of the esteemed members—well, the one from the Tory caucus, Mr Sterling, is still here. Isn't he a trooper? And many, many Liberals are here, I'm pleased to see.

I have been listening, too. There was only one member from the governing party who spoke tonight, and that is the member for Guelph-Wellington, who spoke for just a few minutes. She lamented that we were actually here tonight, that we were here, in her view, wasting our time, that we could all be doing better things. I must say that as she was speaking and as—

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): What have you been doing at your desk?

Ms Churley: I'm about to tell you—signing Christmas cards, if you really want to know; signing Christmas cards as I've been listening to the speeches around me here tonight, waiting for my chance to talk about why I'm glad to have this opportunity tonight and to talk quite seriously about how in a way what's happening here tonight is a sad demonstration of a political system that isn't working for anybody any more. And in that, I include a government: this government, the government before, our government, in a sense. There are many people who know, including our party—and in fact the Liberals talked about it in their platform, changing the system to some form of proportional representation, because this archaic system is outdated and not only doesn't serve the opposition any more as more and more rules are changed to benefit the government, whatever government of the day, if they are not getting their way right away; it is the electorate, the people who elected us to serve their interests, who are most suffering as a result of what goes on in this place under this archaic system of first past the post.

We have a situation in this case of a government that was elected with a large majority. Many people voted for Liberals—that's right—in part to get the Tories out. We all recognize that. I have some New Democratic friends who voted for Liberals, and I'm sure you do too, Mr Speaker, lots of them in certain ridings, because they didn't think in that particular area that we New Democrats had a chance, and they voted for Liberals. As a result of that, we're here tonight, to some extent, debating this motion to debate the throne speech because right after the election, when New Democrats, although we increased our vote—in the popular vote, we had more votes than we did the last time, when we actually had

party status. But we didn't get party status because we're below that arbitrary number that was picked back in 1999, when Mike Harris reduced the number in this place, from 130 to 108, and did not at the same time accordingly reduce the number needed for party status, and as well for quorum and committees. All of those things were left, so that after the election those decisions then became a political football.

You were involved, I believe, Mr Speaker. I was involved—with Dave Christopherson, who was then the House leader of my party, and I was the whip—I was quite engaged in the negotiations—at least then we had negotiations—between all three parties. We objected then to the number eight being chosen for a number of 103, because we looked at the number in Ottawa: 12 for over 300 members. Across the country, we saw that if you took the average, four would be the number for this number of parliamentarians. But we suggested five, and we suggested that on the basis of what? Because we had more members than that; I believe at the time we had nine.

We were thinking ahead to this happening to not only our party. The electorate's pretty volatile these days. I mean, it could be the Liberals next time. It really could. It's hard to believe, I know, when you're in government and you're just full of vim and vinegar, and you have all these plans and you think you're so special and above everybody else in this place, particularly the opposition, and you can't believe that you're going to end up over here—but it happens.

I believe, as I argued then and I argue now, that it's for the sake of democracy. You could argue that without our caucus funding we can't be as effective in question period. We can't represent our constituents or I can't represent my critic area as well as I could when we had the staff to do the media work, to do the research, to help me with all of that. I could travel the province and talk to communities. I can't be as effective; I admit that. I will try, I will do my best, and fortunately for me, I have a pretty long memory now. I'm banking on that in this House; there's a lot of things I know from being around here for a long time and being a community activist before that.

On the other hand, I could say, in another sense, "I'm fine, pal." I'm getting paid still. I'm not getting the extra money. In fact, the other parties get the extra money: you, Mr Speaker, for sitting in that chair. Deputies and deputy whips, House leaders and committee Chairs, all get extra money. We're not getting any of that. I don't care; that's not an issue with me. The fact is, though, I'm still getting my paycheque once a month, so I'm OK as an individual. I got elected; I haven't lost that. I still have my constituency office.

So when people from particularly the government side like to yell out and argue when we try to make it understood why we are arguing ferociously for a fair settlement in terms of our ability in this House to represent our constituents and our principles, they say it's all about the money. Well, it isn't all about the money. I'm not going to get an extra cent out of it, nor do I want an extra cent

out of it. I want the ability to do what I was elected to do, and that is to respond to the government effectively on the issues in the throne speech, which we will be debating soon.

I say in all seriousness to the government members, and particularly the new members who have not sat in the opposition benches—and those who have been here before understand perfectly well what we are talking about here because they've sat over on this side as well and used the tactics to great success. I think about Alvin Curling, now Speaker of the House, who refused to vote. He broke a rule. We're going with the rules to make our point. Mr Curling broke a rule and we supported him because we all, including the Liberals—and he is a Liberal member—believed the Tories were being undemocratic and we needed to do something. We couldn't even do something within the rules that was effective enough to stop the then government, so we actually broke the rules to make our point. That's how strongly we felt, when they were in power, about stopping a government that was running amok and not listening to the democratic wishes of our constituents. But the new members I understand, because when I was first elected in 1990, I had been on city council before that here in Toronto. Anybody who's been on municipal boards or boards of education understands it's a whole different atmosphere the way we debate and come to decisions. It's quite a shock when you come here as a government member and see what seems to you as foolishness a lot of the time because of the archaic rules and the way we use or don't use them. I understand that.

2020

There's also this sense of, "We're the government now. Why are they stopping us? We have a majority. Why can't we just do what we said we were going to do? Why are they stopping us? It's frustrating." I think it takes sitting in the opposition seats to fully understand the implication of being opposite a government in a first-past-the-post system that has all the power, ultimately, to do whatever it wants to do. But we quite genuinely frequently don't agree and we know our constituents don't agree. We need to have the ability within the rules to make our point.

I was thoroughly disappointed when after we did lose—even though we went up in the popular vote—that arbitrary number for party status. The Premier said, "The rules are the rules. Nothing we can do. They were changed once to accommodate New Democrats"—which, by the way, is not correct. The numbers were changed to accommodate the reduction in numbers in this Legislature, no matter who was sitting over here then. It had to be done. That wasn't quite correct.

What really bothers me is to hear a Premier and a government that's now cherry-picking which of the Mike Harris rules they're willing to change or not change. If it benefits them as a majority government to change a Mike Harris rule, then they will change it. But if the rule benefits them, they say, "Well, we won't change that rule. How can we? A rule is a rule," and then complain bitterly and be annoyed that New Democrats are actually

using the rules—as stupid as they may seem to you—to make our point when we're denied the opportunity in this House to raise the issues that are of vital concern to our constituents. I mean that on a constituency riding level and the constituents I represent.

I am the critic for the environment—I have a long history in the environment—for women's issues and as well now for democratic reform. I must say that I'm going to have fun with that one, given that I listened when the Attorney General stood up a couple of days in a row and talked so earnestly about democratic reform and how committed the Liberals are to it, while we sit here day after day and have our leader, who's a former Attorney General in this province, who's been a member sitting in this House on both sides for a number of years, having to ask for unanimous consent to ask one question way down the list—to have to go through that every day.

I want to say sincerely to the Liberals that there are some of you and some of your policies that I can work with and I want to work with. I mentioned a couple of people in particular whom I have a lot of respect for. There are many members I don't know, and because of the animosity in this place from day one, I've never seen anything quite this bad. It's unpleasant for all of us. Kathleen Wynne, the member for Don Valley West, will barely speak to me any more. She's so angry sitting there on the rump, and some others, because of the way we carry on here. She won't speak to me. That's fine. God bless, if that's where she's at.

Interjection.

Ms Churley: I know. There are others who do. But I think it's because some members, Kathleen is one, and others, were progressive. I knew them before and was expecting something different in this place, certainly not this, the kind of behaviour that we've seen here day after day in trying to get things through.

I want to say to the government members in all sincerity, the Tories have a different bent, so to speak, a different philosophy, a different view of life and how the world works, than we do—very different, and God bless. You know, they get up and ask their questions, but we're going to ask different questions. We're going to ask important questions, and I believe many of your members support our position on these. Not all of you, but some of you would agree that we need to be asking the kinds of questions that Ms Martel was asking tonight—the one question that our leader had today about building inspectors, questions around water inspectors. These are all people whom the Tories laid off. They need to be hired back, but you can bet that the Tories aren't going to be asking those kinds of questions; they're going to be pushing you more to the right. They are going to be asking you to cut services. They're already doing it. They're going to be suggesting that you actually cut more out of our public services.

We're the ones who are going to be pulling you in the other direction. I say to all of you, you need that balance. You may think right now, "If we just shut up those pesky New Democrats"—which is what's happened. It's hard to do, isn't it? I think about that game. What do you call

it? Is it gophers or something? A head comes up and you pound it down with a mallet and another one comes up. Then another one and another one. That's what this place has felt like to me. For the first time since I was elected here in 1990—I've had frustrations, both in government and in opposition, but I've never felt like this before—it's a daily frustration. I have things to say. My party has things to say. But you can't shut us down, that's what I'm getting at, no matter how hard you try. It is like that game: You pound one into the ground and another one pops up. Then you pound that one down and another one pops up, and on and on. We will continue to pop up. You're not going to shut us down. You're not going to shut us up.

I'm trying to say to you, what you are doing is wrong. It is just plain wrong. Yeah, we're angry and we're frustrated. So are a lot of the constituents out there, not just New Democrats, who feel that our voice is needed, particularly in view of the fact that many people voted for Liberals because they were tired of the Tories and Tory policies and the cutting and slashing and no longer believe that you can do more with less.

Interjection.

Ms Churley: What did I say?

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): Liberals are OK.

Ms Churley: Well, that's what they thought. People thought when they voted for the Liberals, "We're going to throw those guys out and we're going to start anew, because the Liberals made all those promises and they're not trying to say that we're going to do more with less any more."

So they voted for Liberals, and this is where we're at. Now you are in a situation, and they find themselves in a situation, where there's this big deficit which Liberals said in the campaign didn't exist. We said it did. We know that Gerry Phillips said it did before the campaign, and Monte Kwinter, from the Liberals. Nonetheless, people believed the promises that were made and were very excited at the prospect of having a different government that would come in and do those things. Those people—and many of them are Liberals, not just New Democrats, progressive Liberals, even some Tories—want to see Liberals come up with a plan to be able to keep that promise, and not be completely obsessed with dealing with the deficit, because the Tories have left such an overwhelming social deficit. My colleague Shelley Martel was talking earlier about a few of them—old people in nursing homes, the environment, our education, children's mental health. Every single area we can think of needs reinvestment. There's no way around it.

Liberal members, Liberal cabinet ministers have got to try to find language now around it, because they know they are not going to be able to get the money to do those things. We have the new Minister of Children's Services talking about how she's going to break down the silos so there's better communication, and somehow that's going to help all those 12,000 children of waiting lists for mental health services? That's just unbelievable and unacceptable, and breaking down silos is not going to

change that. It's about having to put those resources back—the same with our nursing homes, our environment, our education—all of those things. We've got to put the resources back because they're being cut way beyond the bone.

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Many Liberals ran on that platform. I know you did, because I read your platform and I heard some of you. Now, because of the deficit—let's leave aside whether or not you even knew about it, because I believe some of you didn't. I believe only a few members in your caucus knew that and you weren't told. You went out and made all those promises, and that's why—not just to get rid of the Tories—people voted for you. New Democrats are with you on that.

When I was a cabinet minister sitting over there, occasionally I would go over to a couple of my colleagues across the floor and say: "Could you start asking me questions on such and such? Because I'm having trouble. Money's tight. We're in a bad recession. I know we really need to do this thing, and I'm having trouble convincing my colleagues. I need you guys to kick up a fuss to help me convince my colleagues that this is important and we need to invest in it." You're not going to have the Tories do that.

In summary, what this is all about is a system that is no longer working for anybody, but in particular it is not working for the people of this province. Mr McGuinty should put his money where his mouth is and demonstrate that he meant it when he said he was going to enhance and improve democracy for all, including the opposition members so that they can better serve their constituents. He still has the opportunity to do that.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I don't believe it. The Liberals don't want to speak. The Conservatives don't want to speak. I find that rather interesting, considering that this is but the buildup to debating the throne speech. I would think that the members from the government would be standing four-square, all of them wanting to speak to this particular motion in order to talk about those promises they made in the last election. I'm rather surprised and a little bit disappointed, I must say, that the members from the government especially don't want to debate this particular motion.

I listen to the members across the way and they say, "What's the debate? It's just a motion to enable us to debate the throne speech," but I've just got to say that the most important thing a government does when they get here first of all is to keep the promises that they make to the electorate—and I want to talk to that specifically—and how they keep those promises is normally what they lay out in a throne speech. I would think that the Liberal members especially would want to be up in debate today, in order to talk about all those things that they were all excited to talk about in the last election.

I remember, as do all my colleagues here, Liberals, New Democrats and Conservatives, who ran in the last election as elected members today, and those who were not so fortunate. We all heard this debate, right? We saw the Liberals go out and talk about how they were against

the privatization of hospitals, and we found out that after this government was elected, one of the very first things they did was forget they made a promise in the last election. If we're going to have this debate tonight on the throne speech, or the ability to debate the throne speech, you would think that members would be getting up in this House and they would be talking about that particular promise.

I was on the campaign trail with all of you, and I remember my Liberal opponent saying, "Vote for me because we really mean it. We're going to cancel the privatization of hospitals in Brampton and Ottawa, and we're going to scrap those private MRIs and those private clinics that the Tories have put in place. You vote for us because we really mean it. Don't vote for the NDP guy. Bisson's a good guy, but at the end of the day he's not going to be in government, and the government's going to be the one to cancel all this stuff."

One of the first things the government, the Fiberals, did when they came here is they broke that promise—

Interjection: The Lie-berals.

Mr Bisson: —or the Lie-berals—they broke that promise they made to the people of Ontario.

I remember the candidate in my riding—as I remember other candidates around this province, as I watched the news during the September election—make a very specific campaign promise that they were going to stop the privatization of hospitals in the province, they were going to stop the privatization of clinics and they were going to stop the privatization of MRIs. What we've got at this point is a government that's saying, "Trust us. We're Liberals. We feel good. We're going to change the P3s, the private hospitals, from being a lease that the Conservatives set with up with private consortiums, to a mortgage." Somehow or other that's keeping a promise? I would think that a lot of Liberals would want to stand up tonight and explain that a little bit. Why is it that this government is not living up to its campaign promise?

I remember, for example, the member who is now the Chair of Management Board, Mr Phillips, Mr Caplan and a number of other Liberal members during this election and leading up to it saying they were going to review the deal on the 407, that basically the deal that the Tories negotiated and allowed the private consortium to get when it came to tolls was, in their view—and ours, as New Democrats—exorbitant and that they had to review the deal. They were going to basically come back and redo the deal so that Ontario motorists had a better deal. One of the first things this government said after it came back was, "Oops, we're Fiberals," or should I say Lie-berals. "We can't hold that promise," because of whatever reason they gave at the time.

I would think in this debate that the members from the Liberal caucus would want to get up and talk about why the Lie-berals/Fiberals didn't keep the campaign promise they made, because, after all, this is a debate on the motion to get to the throne speech. As I said at the beginning, the very important thing that you do when you get here, when you're elected, is—as they say in the English where I come from—you dance with the woman who

brought you. If you make promises to people, you've got to remember to keep them once you get elected. I think that's important. If there is a certain lack of trust in politicians and lack of confidence in the overall system, it's because people run and say one thing—I always say Liberals run as New Democrats and when they get elected they try to rule like Tories. People get a little bit worried. But on the 407, again, we're finding that the Liberals, or I should say the Fiberals, are not keeping to what they said in the last election.

Then we look at the whole issue of rate caps. This is the one I find really interesting. We, as New Democrats, said from the beginning, when the Conservative government moved to privatize Ontario Hydro and moved to deregulate the electricity market, that was the wrong way to go, that the basic thing we need to do in this province is to provide electricity at cost and to make sure that we have a proper supply of electricity when it comes to the province. When we did that—are you guys having a great conversation?

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: I thought so. OK, thank you.

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: I will in a minute, but I'm just wondering what that's all about.

I would just say, as I remember that particular debate, we ended up having the Liberals at the time, who basically jumped in bed with the Tories and said initially that they were in favour—

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: They did jump in bed; they did. I remember Mike Harris left office and said, "I'm going to privatize Ontario Hydro and deregulate." Ernie Eves got elected as the new leader and he said, "I'm going to go ahead with Mike Harris's pledge to privatize and deregulate." What Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals did initially was jump in bed with the Tories and say, "We're all for privatization." I remember that letter. Remember that letter that Dalton McGuinty sent October 2001, which said, "We're on the side of industry, we're on the side of the private utility generators, and we stand for deregulation and privatization"? Howard Hampton and the New Democrats said that was wrong.

Mr Marchese: That was a \$300 dinner, wasn't it?

Mr Bisson: Yes, it was a \$300 fundraiser; that's why they sent the letter. But that's for another debate.

We said, as New Democrats, that was nuts. At the end of the day, you have to have a public utility that provides electricity at cost and does so in a constant supply for the economy of Ontario and the people who live here.

At first, not a lot of people were listening, but eventually, after May, when the hydro market opened, people just saw their bills go through the roof. They doubled. All of a sudden, the Liberals said: "Oh, God, we're wrong. Sorry. We want to flip-flop. We're now not in favour of market deregulation. We want to have a rate cap." Do you remember that? They pushed that they wanted to have a rate cap, because they said that this province couldn't afford to have high utility rates. Because of the push of Howard Hampton and the New Democrats,

eventually the Tories backed down and they put a rate cap in.

2040

I remember the vote. We had a vote in this Legislature. We said, "Rate caps are a weird way of dealing with it. The real way to deal with it is to keep electricity under public control. To put rate caps is only to subsidize the private sector." We said, "We don't want to hide the mess. At the end of the day, if the Tories want to fix the problem they created, they have to re-regulate electricity and make sure it's a public system."

The Liberals said, "We're in favour, with the Tories, of rate caps." So when the Tories proposed their legislation, the Liberals got up and supported the Tory legislation that created the rate caps. We voted in opposition, as you remember, because we said public power is the way to go.

Then the election happened, and Mr McGuinty stood up in the election and said, "Oh no, if you're asking me a question, media, on where I am on rate caps, I'm all for rate caps. I'd keep them in place." He said he'd keep the rate caps in place until 2006. I remember watching those interviews during the election when McGuinty was asked by the media and he said, "I would not scrap the rate caps if I was elected as Premier. I would keep them in place until 2006." What's the first thing the guy does when he gets elected? He goes, "I should have had a V8. I forgot the rate cap thing." He breaks another promise.

They wonder why the Toronto Star, the Globe and Mail and the National Post are calling these guys Fiberals and Lie-berals? Because I've never seen a government break the amount of promises that this government has done in its first month in office. They broke their very basic promise around rate caps. This government has gone the other way.

Mr Marchese: Is it a big deal?

Mr Bisson: I think it's a very big deal.

Mr Marchese: Are you sure?

Mr Bisson: It's a huge deal. Listen, I think this is going to be part of this government's undoing. We'll have another debate on hydro as we go on—

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: That's what I'm saying. We're going to have another debate on this. This spring, the bills will go up by a little bit. They're controlling what the bills will go up this year, so they'll go up a little bit: 30%—whoa, that's a little bit, on both distribution and generation. Wait until they open the market in May 2005.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: Well, listen. Here goes a Liberal who says, "What's going to happen?" We said when the Tories opened the market that the rates would go through the roof, and I remember John Baird hanging off the edge of his seat, yelling, "You don't know what you're talking about, Howard Hampton," and Ernie Eves doing the same thing. What happened? Can you remind me?

Ms Martel: It was Stockwell.

Mr Bisson: It was Stockwell; that's right. He had to resign. That was another story.

The rates went through the roof, and that's what going to happen in 2005, because you can't have a partially deregulated system. You either have to go all the way, which I don't agree with, either you have to completely deregulate, which I think is disastrous, or you have to completely keep it under public control. To have a system—it's like being a little bit pregnant. You can't have a system—that's what you guys are trying to do as Liberals—where you say, "We're going to partially deregulate the system, but we're going to call it public." You expect (a) that the private sector will invest in that climate and (b) that prices are going to stay stable? It can't happen. You have to go one way or the other. The Tories wanted to go by way of deregulation. They couldn't do it, because the rates went through the roof. We're saying, you have to keep it under the public system.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: Just look at California, look at Ontario, look at Alberta, look at everywhere else where we have a private system. That's a debate for a little bit later.

My point is, the Liberals campaigned on not removing the rate caps and one of the first things they did was what? That's right, you got it; they removed the rate caps. And they wonder why they're called Lie-berals. They wonder why they're called Fiberals. You get called what you deserve, I guess, to a certain extent.

But then it gets a little bit more interesting: auto insurance. I ran the last campaign on auto insurance. That was part of my campaign. About 50% on the whole public power thing was auto insurance. We've been saying as New Democrats, we're getting people who are coming through our constituency offices across this province who have all kinds of horror stories that insurance on automobiles, trucks and houses has gone through the roof. We'll just talk about auto insurance for now. I ran in the last campaign and I said the only way to fix the system was to do a public system like we've got in Manitoba, like we've got in Saskatchewan or like we've got in BC. If you take a look at the system, you see that a 23-year-old who is driving a 1987 Chevette in Timmins, Ontario, in the system we have now in Ontario, pays how much? Four thousand six hundred dollars, with no accident, a perfect driving record.

The same driver with the same Chevette in Manitoba, how much does he pay? He pays \$700. They stand here and they say, "Oh, public auto doesn't work." I don't know; I'm a ratepayer. I'm a guy who buys insurance like everybody else. So \$700 versus \$4,600? It seems to me they're doing something right in Manitoba and they're doing something wrong in the province of Ontario.

So this government comes in and says, "We're going to fix the problem. We're going to freeze rates and roll them back," they said in the last election. So they come into this particular campaign, they say they're going to fix the problem, they get elected, they bring in a bill that they say, they purport, is going to freeze rates temporarily. They don't talk about reduction.

Mr Marchese: Oh, later. Mike Colle is going to fix that.

Mr Bisson: Do you believe that?

Mr Marchese: Oh, yeah. Mike is going to fix it.

Mr Bisson: Listen, I believe in Santa Claus; Christmas is around the corner, all right?

But anyway, in this particular instance they're saying they're going to freeze rates temporarily, but when you look at the bill, there's no such thing as freezing rates because section 6 says, what? "Go to it. If there's anything you have as an insurance company that means to say you've got to raise your rates, it's all right. Go before the superintendent of insurance and get your rate increase."

Of course, insurance companies have never done that in the past. How do you think insurance companies have got rate increases up to now? They've gone to the superintendent of insurance and have said, "I'm sorry, Mr Cratchit, I am so poor. I'm losing all kinds of money. My insurance company can't afford to pay any more and we need more money. We're broke." They've been doing that for years, and these guys have put this inside the clause, so I just say, why are the Liberals—or I should say the Lie-berals, the Fiberals—not getting up in this debate, talking about why they broke some of those promises in the last election?

The last one I want to spend a little bit more time on is what they're doing around democracy. I remember in the last Parliament, every time the Tories got up, and that was on each and every bill, and moved the time allocation motion on Wednesdays—because you can set your clock to the Tories. What would happen on Wednesdays in his House? You would have a time allocation motion. You knew if it was Wednesday, you were in the province of Ontario and the Tories were in government, they were time-allocating a bill somewhere.

I remember those members across the way, the now Minister of Tourism, the Minister of Health—remember the Minister of Education? He was the best one, Mr Kennedy—my good friend Mr Bartolucci, the Minister of Northern Development—every time they got up and they moved a time allocation motion, the Fiberals would get up and they'd say, "Oh, this is an affront to democracy. We can't have real debate. When we become government, we're going to be different."

Boy, were they different. They're not doing time allocation any more. They've imported something from the UK—for people who don't know what we're talking about, England, the mother of all Parliaments—and they've got the mother of all time allocation motions. Never mind that the Tories used to give us three days for debate. You know, the scrooges who stole democracy across the way—because it is a Christmas season—are now giving us a day, and I guess we should feel very humbled and grateful that the Liberals—I should say the Fiberals—give us one day to debate a bill.

Today we have this motion. Under the Tory rules, under section 46, if this motion came before the House, you would have three days of debate. The Fiberals break their democracy pledge and now change the rules in this

House by way of this motion they did last week that says, "We don't want you having three days. We're different. We don't believe in time allocation motions that only limit debates to three days. Darn it, we're going to have one."

I'm just saying, you guys are going backwards. You were supposed to increase democracy, not decrease it. And they wonder why New Democrats on this side are getting somewhat upset with this government, because we're saying we believe in democracy.

Mr Marchese: Send the laws by e-mail.

Mr Bisson: Well, that's where they want to go, but that's another debate.

We believe that, quite frankly, for democracy to work around this place, there has to be debate in this House that is a two-way debate. I accept as an opposition member that at the end of the day the government has to have its bill. I accept that, and I know at the end of the day they're going to get their bill, but they have to be held accountable. How do you do that? One, by question period, by making sure that each and every day in this assembly, members of this House, including New Democrats, can stand in this House and hold government accountable to the decisions they make.

2050

When they break a promise on hydro or they break a promise on 407 or they break a promise on private hospitals or they break a promise—God—on democracy, you have to allow New Democrats—

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: The Tories aren't going to ask those questions.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: Well, we're not going to taunt the Tories tonight, but for ideological reasons, and let's say for reasons of convenience, they're not going to ask questions of the Liberals on that.

How can democracy work if you don't allow the members of the opposition to ask questions? The government across the way is playing this cute little game that says, "Oh, we're being good to you. We're going to give you a question. Right down at the bottom of the order when all the media is out of here, you can have a question. Not a problem. Mr Hampton, do you want a question? You can have a question way down at the bottom of the order."

Somehow or other, as New Democrats, we're supposed to be happy with that? We're saying to you, if you really believe what you said prior to the election and you believe what you said during the election—because certainly you didn't believe it after you got elected—you've got to believe that for a government to work there has to be real democracy in this assembly. Everything you guys have done up to now indicates, quite frankly, that you don't want real democracy. You want to have a question period where you have fluffballs being raised by your backbenchers, who say, "Minister, can I ask you when you are coming to our riding and when you're

going to talk to the people of my riding about this very important issue?"

I say, send a memo. Lean over and talk to the minister. He's only three benches over. I can do that myself. I would never get up as an opposition member and ask that question because you can set that up pretty easily with a one-to-one meeting. If you're going to have democracy work in this place, you have to have real questions; you have to have real debate. I was hoping that this government, at the end of the day, would see reason and deal with the issues before this House right now when it comes to the participation not only of New Democrats but of all members of this House to make sure that democracy is meaningful. The day we go down the path where we say, "Government knows best and we don't have to give the right to opposition," is the day that we give in to some of the things that we fought against so hard for many years of wars around this world. I say to the members, let's see you stand up and defend what you did by way of this motion, in terms of how you are treating the opposition or anybody else.

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): I'm not going to be long on this, because it's a motion to have the throne speech debate. Really, we should get into the throne speech debate and discuss things there. But I do want to say with regard to the speakers from the New Democratic Party that they do make a valid point; that is, that this government has not been very generous with the opposition parties. It started off—and I was on the transition team for my party, trying to get ministers moved out of their accommodation, into accommodation here at the parliamentary buildings. I was all set to meet with the government to deal with the moving of the ministers out of their offices so the new cabinet that was going to be sworn in on October 23 could in fact move into their premises.

Well, there was a delay. The Premier's office was hiring on all these political operatives from Chrétien's operation and they were having a lot to say about what was going to happen here down at Queen's Park when they got in control. So we sat down, finally, after about a week and half or two weeks, while our ministers were trying to move out of their offices to accommodate the changeover, which I think is a responsible thing to do when ministers are moving out of their offices. But when we finally sat down, what had transpired was that the new Liberal government, through their political operatives—I don't really think the members from the Liberal benches were involved in this; I don't think that even the cabinet ministers were aware of it. But it was obvious that the leadership, Mr McGuinty, had turned over to political operatives a big part of his decision-making at that time.

So when we sat down and we started talking about office space, our party said, "Let's ask the Clerk's office what they recommend will be the most economical, smoothest transition that can take place in the Legislative Building." And they gave us a plan which basically we agreed with, which gave the opposition the third floor, which has been the tradition in this place for a long, long

time. The opposition party basically got the third floor, and you had the Leader of the Opposition in one corner of the building and the rest of the members spread around. Well, this didn't work, because the new regime wanted to move the cabinet offices from the Whitney Block, a building across the street connected by a tunnel. What the new political operatives wanted to do was really to occupy the Legislative Assembly building, the Legislature building, which had really come into the hands of the members of the Legislative Assembly since—about 1988, a transition took place.

This place used to be run by the Ministry of Government Services of the government of Ontario. The parking lot attendants, the cleaning staff, all the people who were supplying all the services here were hired essentially by the government of Ontario, even though the Legislative Assembly was operating here. But we made a shift. There was a shift that I think Premier Peterson, Premier Rae, and finally Premier Harris put the final marks to. That was that this building, save and except for a small corner of it, where you were going to have your cabinet meetings and an office where the Premier could meet with people in the corner of this building, was going to be the precinct and there for the members of this Legislature.

What happened was that these political operatives that Mr McGuinty has brought in wanted to take over a significant part of this building, so much so that they occupied 13 former MPPs' offices. What this did was that it then meant that the government House leader could not deliver to the opposition, our party, what had been traditionally the opposition area, the third floor of this assembly.

I realize that a lot of the people watching this would say, "Well, this is pretty petty." And it is pretty petty, it is pretty small peanuts, but I think it is an indication that this government and this Premier don't get it. He doesn't get the separation that is necessary between the cabinet of Ontario and the other members of this Legislative Assembly. There has to be a separation. The separation is healthy. The separation is right. By moving some of his minions over here, occupying essentially the whole east wing of this building, the first, second and third floors, it's not only an inconvenience for the opposition party but it's also an indication that he really doesn't get it in terms of how we have been transforming this place into a place where MPPs can feel comfortable, where they can go to their Speaker, who's in control of this building and all the services associated with it, can take their complaints to him and that it's different from the government of Ontario. The government of Ontario essentially was across the street, out of these precincts.

So that was number one. We had some arguments over it, and I wasn't pleased. Our leader wasn't pleased. The opposition is now in four different places in this building. It's a minor inconvenience, but it's petty. It smacks of people like Warren Kinsella and those kinds of people, who really want to put it to the opposition. They want to show their muscle. They're pretty, pretty strong people.

2100

So then the next step. Even before there were any consultations with our party, the Premier of the day says that the NDP aren't going to get party status, and the Premier of the day says, "We're going to make new standing orders." No consultation with us. They didn't phone us and say, "Mr Eves, what do you think of how the standing orders are going to be changed to accommodate these seven independent members?" When we change the standing orders in this place, we do require consultation. Even though you have a majority, the process, the tradition is that you talk to all of the parties and you talk to them about what those changes should be, because the institution of the Legislative Assembly is important to carry on from Parliament to Parliament. It just shows a lack, I think, on the part of the Premier, that he doesn't really understand or respect the institution to the degree that I would have thought he would have, taking all of the talk that he had during the election about reforming democracy in this place.

Then there's this little game that he's played here. He's got the New Democrats way down there. He's got the rump here. I guess there's one kind of cheek for one side and another kind of cheek for the other side. I think that this is silliness on the part of the Premier, and it smacks of the Warren Kinsella kind of thing, "We're going to really put it to these guys," and all the rest of it.

I guess the other part, too, is, we—my House leader—were negotiating who are going to be committee chairs. The tradition that we have in this place is that the estimates committee, the public accounts committee and the appointments committee have always been chaired by opposition people, for obvious reasons. Because those committees are asking the government to bring forward their plans, they are critical by their nature and should be chaired by opposition members; they shouldn't be chaired by members of the government. So I rose in the House today, as you know, and asked the Premier about the fact that he was appointing to our agencies committee, which reviews all the government appointments—why is he appointing a Liberal backbencher?

One of the other moves that this Premier has made, which makes it even worse, is that he has now appointed every member of the caucus to a cabinet committee. He thinks that that's inclusive, and that's wonderful, and all the rest of it. Maybe some of the members think it is, but, again, you've forgotten the separation between the cabinet and other members of the Legislature. How are these members of the agencies committee, who are backbenchers who sit on cabinet committees, going to separate themselves from the cabinet when it comes to cabinet appointments? Will they not feel an obligation to support each and every appointment that the cabinet of Ontario makes to an agency, board or commission?

We have another misunderstanding of how the traditions of this institution are operating. We had a bill introduced today about accountability of cabinet ministers. People should read this, because it is a real joke. It is an unbelievable joke. It says that a cabinet minister must be

here two thirds of the time. Quite frankly, when Mike Harris was the Premier, he insisted that all cabinet ministers be there, save and except when they were out doing other kinds of business. It's different for different kinds of cabinet ministers, depending upon the kinds of tasks that cabinet minister has. By having the Premier keep the report card, what kind of accountability is that? Because if the Premier marks down a black mark for a cabinet minister, guess who's going to get criticized? The Premier. Well, the cabinet minister will get criticized too, but the Premier will be criticized for choosing this person to be part of his cabinet. So we have the fox in charge of the chicken house. It's a silly bill too, because there are loopholes that you can go through: "These kinds of absences won't count; these ones won't. You don't have to stay for the whole thing if the Premier thinks you should go and do something else," and all the rest of it.

Listen, when I was a cabinet minister, from time to time I had to leave this place to go back to Ottawa or whatever, where my constituency is, or I had to go do some business. I would go across the floor and ask the House leader for the New Democratic Party and the House leader for the Liberals, "Do you have any questions for me today?" And they would say, "No, Norm, I don't have any questions for you." I'd say, "Do you mind if I leave?" and I would leave. That would be the proper way to do it. But I consulted with the opposition, because it was their time to ask me about it. Now the Premier's going to have the cabinet minister go down and talk to him about whether they should leave or not.

I guess the sum total of all of this is, the New Democratic Party speakers, when they were talking—all of them have a great deal of experience here, as perhaps I do. It doesn't matter what rules the government puts together. You guys have 72 members. You can ram through any rules you want here. But if you do not have co-operation on this side from opposition members, you will have a hell of a time in the next four years trying to get your legislation through, because they will be able to stop, they will be able to drag, they will be able to do all kinds of things to you, regardless of the rules you set up.

We were very successful when we were 20 members, with the NDP. We were 16 members, the third party, from 1987 to 1990. We could stop the government too. The rules do change from time to time, and I think the rules have to change. I think actually they should be changed now to allow the third party to have party status, because when we made the rule to go from 12 to eight, part of the philosophy behind doing that was that we went from 130 members to 103, and so it was somewhat proportional, going from 12 to eight. But eight was an arbitrary number; it could have been seven. The third party had nine at that point in time, and we thought we'd pick eight as the number at that time, but it's an arbitrary number.

You have to look at what the people of Ontario said to us as politicians in the last election. They said you guys are the government. You got 46% of the vote. We're in opposition. You got 72 seats. We got 24, with about 34%

or 35%. So you're far overrepresented there with regard to the number of seats you got with the popular vote you got. But the NDP got 15% of the vote and they only got seven seats. Given the fact that they got 15% of the vote, not quite half what we got but about a third of what you got, about a third of your popular vote, I don't think there's anybody in Ontario who thinks that they shouldn't have party status. I think it's healthy for the Parliament, healthy for the government to have them as an opposition party.

As I was saying to one of the reporters not too long ago, when Premier McKenna won all of the seats in New Brunswick, didn't have one member in opposition, he made a special effort to go to the other parties, and he said to them, "I want to give you research dollars. I want you to be able to function as parties, even though you haven't won one seat in our Legislature." He did that because he knew that if he was allowed to languish in the luxury of not having anybody call him or his ministers to account, eventually his government would be in trouble. I think McKenna was a pretty strong Premier, as everybody in this Legislature probably believes that he was a pretty strong Premier.

I guess the summary of my remarks is that I understand what this government has said in the election, but your actions afterwards have shown a significant amount of arrogance, arrogance that will not only cost you in the future, but it's going to cost you now when we have to sit here night after night, not talking about real issues but about issues that don't deserve our time.

I urge the government of the day to listen more closely to the New Democratic Party in terms of allowing them to participate the way they should in this Legislature so that we can avoid the kind of debate and waste of time that we have had. I don't blame them for wasting your time tonight. I don't blame them for doing what they are doing, because they have no other choice. You're showing the arrogance to encourage them to continue this.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

On November 25, 2003, Mr Caplan moved that the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor to this House be taken into consideration as early as the first sessional day following passage of this motion.

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

All in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

I have received a document from the chief government whip asking that this vote be deferred until routine proceedings tomorrow.

Hon Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that this motion carry? The motion carries.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 2112.

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CONTENTS

Tuesday 9 December 2003

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Throne speech debate,	
government notice of motion	
number 9, <i>Mr Caplan</i>	
Mrs Sandals.....	577
Mr Kormos.....	577
Mr Hampton.....	580
Mr Marchese.....	583
Ms Martel.....	586
Ms Churley.....	588
Mr Bisson.....	591
Mr Sterling.....	594
Vote deferred.....	596