



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

First Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Première session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 26 April 2004

Lundi 26 avril 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 26 April 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 26 avril 2004

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): Today I rise to talk about an important public policy priority in advance of next month's budget. We will hear a lot of discussion about health care and education, as those are the leading issues on the public agenda. But it's important that we as legislators, and the government, hear those softer voices, those quieter people whose voices aren't as loud. It's important that we listen to them as well.

Back in the 2001 budget, people with developmental disabilities and those who work to provide support to them received a five-year budget commitment going up to \$197 million a year, in addition to \$67 million in capital. This is to help families, particularly aging parents who have raised children with a developmental disability who are now adults. It includes residential support, day programs and respite support. This announcement was greeted with great fanfare when, as a by-election candidate, the Minister of Finance, Greg Sorbara, complimented the previous government on this important initiative.

Today, on behalf of people with developmental disabilities, not just in my constituency of Nepean-Carleton but throughout Ontario, I want to call upon the minister to keep his commitment to our most vulnerable citizens with developmental disabilities and continue this worthwhile initiative that has done so much to help the most vulnerable in our communities.

RIDING OF SARNIA-LAMBTON

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): I am pleased to rise in this House to speak about Sarnia-Lambton's journey to sustainable development. With the political will of this government and its Ministry of the Environment, the co-operation of industry and the great safety record of our local workforce, Sarnia-Lambton is well on its way to becoming a model community that is able to achieve a pro-environment, pro-business standard of excellence. This is the 21st-century way of doing business.

Sarnia-Lambton has had a troubled legacy of environmental problems. Our government, under Premier Dalton

McGuinty, is playing a constructive role in helping us to turn this image around. It is only with the understanding that it is with pro-environment and pro-business attitudes that we will be able to achieve sustainable development. And only with strong leadership from government at all levels and industry and public support will we be able to achieve this goal of sustainable development.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): On Friday, April 23, Mr Jerry Ouellette and I visited the Wynfield, a new long-term-care facility in my riding. Ms Katherine Jackson, the administrator, showed us around and gave us a tour of the facility. At the same meeting was Mr Bruce Scully, director of operations for community care.

The Wynfield, as you might know, is a beautiful, new long-term-care facility, home to 172 residents. On our tour, I was impressed with the caring staff and the cheerful residents.

Elizabeth Witmer, our health critic and former health minister, asked Minister Smitherman a question on April 6 on long-term-care issues. The minister refused to be clear on the Liberal election platform to invest \$6,000 per resident. The facts are unclear, creating instability. However, for Wynfield and its 172 seniors and over 120 staff, the future is anything but bright. The traditional municipal tax rebate of 90% is being retroactively clawed back. This will force Wynfield and other long-term-care facilities in Ontario to reduce services to clients and, potentially, to lay off staff.

I am certain Elizabeth Witmer will act to protect our long-term-care community and will work to protect senior citizens. Will Mr Smitherman ignore the issue, while breaking yet another Liberal promise?

EVENTS IN YORK WEST

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): Last Friday, I had the privilege of attending the grand opening of our new industrial woodworking and pre-apprenticeship facility in my riding of York West. Before, a space unutilized, it's now providing students with hands-on learning experience as well as computer-assisted machine training for industrial woodworking.

As we are well aware, there has long been a cry in the marketplace for skilled tradespeople. I'm delighted that establishments such as this, along with the \$10 million allotted for Ontario's apprenticeship program, will help

in opening the gate for the success of our youth and enhance the future prosperity of our great province.

Established with the positive partnership and co-operation of the Maintenance and Construction Skilled Trades Council, design and construction services, the Toronto District School Board, the industrial woodworkers' local 1072 and the carpenters' union local 27, their combined efforts have contributed to making this dream a viable reality.

It gives me great pleasure as well to announce another happy event which transpired Friday morning. A \$71,000 Ontario Trillium Foundation grant was presented to the Philip Aziz Centre, a community-based home hospice program that will give support to children, families and adults living with HIV and other life-threatening illnesses. The centre provides a critically important role in our community by restoring competence and compassion to hospice care. York West is fortunate to have a specialized organization devoted to assisting our people in need.

SECOND-STAGE HOUSING

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I rise today to remind the government of its commitment to re-fund second-stage housing in this province. I believe it was on April 6 that the Premier made an announcement of \$3.5 million, which led us all to believe, including the people who work, or used to work, in second-stage housing, that that \$3.5 million would go towards re-funding the programs the previous government cut in the existing second-stage housing.

I even stood in this House after the announcement was made—it's on the record—congratulating the government for finally keeping a promise and reinstating that \$3.5 million back into the existing second-stage housing. As you know, under the previous government, all of those programs were cut.

We were all led to believe that \$3.5 million was going into that existing housing. I questioned the minister a day later, and the result of that questioning was that that money is not actually going back into existing second-stage housing, although the minister for children's services was not clear about that. But we have talked to ministry officials, and what is happening is that there will be consultations about how that money will be spent. The government should keep its promise and put that money back into programs in existing second-stage housing.

1340

POWASSAN MAPLE SYRUP FESTIVAL

Ms Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): I rise today to congratulate the organizing committee of the Powassan Maple Syrup Festival for their efforts over the weekend. The seventh annual Powassan Maple Syrup Festival took place this past Saturday in my riding and attracted thousands from our area.

Visitors were provided with bus rides to two local maple syrup manufacturers, horse-drawn carriage rides,

performances on three stages by local talent and all kinds of maple syrup delicacies, including beaver tails, maple syrup baked beans, maple syrup cotton candy and—I'm sure what the member for Durham would appreciate—maple syrup butter tarts.

The event included the entire community, with local churches, schools, service clubs and local businesses participating. Many local craftspeople and artisans have booths on the main street. As well, Geisler Brothers, known worldwide for their cedar strip boats, opened up their workshop and allowed tours.

The highlight for me, of course, was the celebrity pancake toss. The mayors of South River, Nipissing, Chisholm, East Ferris and the former mayor of North Bay as well as the defending champion, the mayor of Powassan, participated. Unfortunately, I was not successful—not enough practice this year—but hats off to the mayor of South River, who holds the title.

I would like to salute George Thompson, the chair of this festival, and his entire committee as well as Bob Young, the mayor of Powassan, for a delightful day. I've already marked the eighth annual festival on my calendar for next April and invite all the members of this assembly to join me in Powassan.

WATER QUALITY

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I am pleased to rise this afternoon to speak on behalf of the many thousands of rural Ontario churches and community halls.

The Dalton McGuinty church tax is the newest Liberal assault on the citizens of rural Ontario. It is very clear that many rural Ontario churches and community halls will be forced to close as a result of the implementation of regulation 170/03.

After a very rigorous partisan advertising campaign costing Ontario citizens tens of thousands of dollars, it is now clear that the McGuinty Liberals will force churches and community halls to install expensive water treatment equipment.

Church congregations and community halls are most often supported by fewer than 20 to 30 families, and yet the churches and community halls are the heart and soul of rural Ontario. Without compensation from the McGuinty Liberals, we will see rural communities fall one at a time.

I'm asking the McGuinty Liberals to think beyond the GTA borders and respect the hard-working families of rural Ontario. They expect and deserve to have churches and community halls. They expect that their churches and community halls, most often built over 100 years ago, can remain active and vibrant for many more years to come. I call upon the McGuinty Liberals to compensate the citizens of rural Ontario as they force the implementation of regulation 170/03.

I'd also like to thank the deputy mayor of the township of Severn in my riding, Judith Cox, who is distributing petitions to all the churches and community halls in the riding of Simcoe North.

HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Mr Tony C. Wong (Markham): Today I would like to recognize an important milestone in my riding: the 150th anniversary of the naming of the village of Unionville in the town of Markham. Unionville officially kicked off its celebrations this past weekend on Sunday, April 25.

For the early German settlers to the area, 1854 must have been a proud year as they witnessed their village get a post office and thus a name. In 2004, Unionville will celebrate its finely preserved heritage, an important part of which centres around the many exceptionally well-preserved heritage buildings on Main Street. Some of these buildings are still occupied by the direct descendants of the original owners from the 1820s. Unionville's careful preservation of these buildings has earned much praise and has helped Markham win the Prince of Wales heritage award for heritage preservation.

Markham was the first city in Canada to receive this prestigious award from the Prince of Wales. I am proud that Markham is setting such a fine example in heritage preservation. I'm also proud that this government, which recognizes successes like Unionville, has recently introduced legislation strengthening heritage preservation in Ontario.

The 150th anniversary celebrations in Unionville will focus on music, art and culture in a year-long extravaganza. Unionville's award-winning heritage Main Street welcomes you.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): In question period on Thursday, I asked the environment minister a serious question about a life-and-death issue in my riding: the four-laning of Highway 7 between Carleton Place and Highway 417. In response, I received a bizarre and entirely inappropriate attack. The minister indicated a personal grudge against me and suggested she intended to take her animosity out on my constituents. Further, she made the comments while acting as Premier in this Legislature.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Let me hear the member's statement.

Mr Sterling: Needless to say, my colleagues, my constituents and I were surprised and dismayed.

In my part of the province, many people know someone who has been killed along this stretch of Highway 7. That's why the previous government committed \$85 million to this much-needed four-laning.

As I stated in the Legislature last week, people are dying on the existing two-lane highway. Progress is being held up due to an environmental approval, in spite of this being a minor environmental approval. The minister has sat on this file for over six months. It is clear that this minister is not on top of this file.

I'm calling on the Premier to intervene. What should be a routine part of her ministry's function has clearly slipped off the radar screen. We can save lives by moving forward with the four-laning of Highway 7. The government must act today.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS
AMENDMENT ACT (HOURS OF WORK
AND OTHER MATTERS), 2004LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI
(HEURES DE TRAVAIL ET AUTRES
QUESTIONS)

Mr Bentley moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 63, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to hours of work and certain other matters / Projet de loi 63, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne les heures de travail et d'autres questions.

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

Mr Bentley.

Hon Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): I will defer my statement to ministerial statements.

PENSION BENEFITS
AMENDMENT ACT, 2004LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES RÉGIMES DE RETRAITE

Mr Kormos moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 64, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act / Projet de loi 64, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les régimes de retraite.

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

Mr Kormos.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): This bill amends the Pension Benefits Act to raise the amount guaranteed by the pension benefits guarantee fund from \$1,000 per month to \$2,500 per month.

COLLECTION AGENCIES
AMENDMENT ACT, 2004LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES AGENCES DE RECOUVREMENT

Mr Sergio moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 65, An Act to amend the Collection Agencies Act / Projet de loi 65, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les agences de recouvrement.

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

Mr Sergio.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): The bill amends the Collection Agencies Act by specifying that certain behaviours are prohibited practices and prohibited methods in the collection of debt. The bill establishes a discipline committee and an appeals committee to deal with complaints concerning engaging in prohibited practices or employing prohibited methods in the collection of debt.

1350

PRIVATE INVESTIGATORS
AND SECURITY GUARDS
AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES ENQUÊTEURS PRIVÉS
ET LES GARDIENS

Mr Sergio moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 66, An Act to amend the Private Investigators and Security Guards Act / Projet de loi 66, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les enquêteurs privés et les gardiens.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carried? Carried.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): The bill amends the Private Investigators and Security Guards Act to require that licensees under the act meet certain educational and other standards.

PIPELINE EXCAVATION SAFETY
AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ
ET LA RESPONSABILISATION
RELATIVES À L'EXCAVATION
DE PIPELINES

Mr Sergio moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 67, An Act to provide for greater safety and accountability in pipeline excavations and to amend the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000 to require annual reports in the pipeline sector and to increase penalties for offences under the Act / Projet de loi 67, Loi prévoyant une sécurité et une responsabilisation accrues en matière d'excavation de pipelines et modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes techniques et la sécurité afin d'exiger la présentation de rapports annuels dans le secteur des pipelines et d'augmenter les peines imposées pour les infractions à la Loi.

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

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): The bill places a duty on the operators of pipelines to obtain declarations from professional engineers specifying the location of their pipelines and places a duty on engineers to provide those declarations with care and skill. Anyone engaged in

an activity that may interfere with a pipeline is required to first ascertain the location of the pipeline from the operator and then to engage in the activity that may interfere with the pipeline safely and with skill.

The bill also provides that it is an offence to breach any of the various duties imposed with respect to safe pipeline excavation and establishes maximum penalties for those offences.

In addition, the bill amends the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000, to require designated administrative authorities and directors to submit annual reports to the minister on the state of public safety in the oil and gas pipeline sector. The minister is required to submit each report to the Lieutenant Governor in Council and to table it in the Legislative Assembly.

Finally, the penalties for offenders under the act are increased, and the penalties for a director or officer of a body corporate who fails to take reasonable care to prevent the body corporate from committing an offence under the act are increased as well.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

HOURS OF WORK
HEURES DE TRAVAIL

Hon Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): Today I have the privilege of introducing the Employment Standards Amendment Act (Hours of Work and other Matters), 2004. As a government, we are delivering real, positive change by introducing legislation that would, if passed, ensure employees have a genuine choice about whether to work extra hours. This government made a commitment to end the 60-hour work-week introduced by the previous government and to restore a worker's right to choose whether to work more than 48 hours in a week. This legislation keeps that commitment.

We are taking a fair, balanced approach. We will protect the vulnerable and support the choice of all workers whether to work extra hours, while ensuring Ontario businesses have the necessary flexibility to compete nationally and internationally.

To work more than 48 hours, the employee must agree and the employer's application must receive Ministry of Labour approval.

Les employés dévoués de l'Ontario méritent de pouvoir concilier une vie professionnelle et une vie personnelle riche et valorisante.

La législation adoptée par le gouvernement précédent a fait en sorte que certains employés étaient trop préoccupés par leur travail pour refuser à leur employeur de travailler jusqu'à 60 heures par semaine. Aucun mécanisme de surveillance gouvernemental n'était en place pour appuyer le choix des employés. On avait aboli, sans trop se préoccuper de la façon dont les

personnes vulnérables pourraient faire valoir leurs droits, un mécanisme de protection fondamental qui était en place depuis des décennies.

This is not a small issue. Estimates are that over 466,000 Ontario employees worked 50 or more hours in a week in 2003—and those are the ones we can measure. Those are most likely underestimates, as it is difficult to measure workers in the most vulnerable situations. A recent study by Dr Linda Duxbury of Carleton University and Dr Chris Higgins of the University of Western Ontario found that work-life conflict has increased over the past decade. They also found that work demands have increased, leading to a significant portion of the Canadian workforce having trouble balancing the competing roles of employee, parent, spouse and elder caregiver.

After announcing our government's intention to roll back the 60-hour workweek, we asked for the best advice on how to achieve that goal. During the ensuing consultations, ministry officials met with 31 key labour, employer and community stakeholders. We received over 30 submissions from other stakeholders and almost 80 letters from members of the general public.

We listened. We are proposing to restore a protection that existed for decades, but doing so in a way that reflects the need of business to compete in today's society. With the companion announcement I will speak to in a moment, we will also ensure that the legislation will actually protect those it must.

Ministry approval would be streamlined for businesses. They would be able to file on-line, by fax, by mail or in person and receive timely responses from the Ministry of Labour. Approvals could be for up to three years, eliminating the necessity to apply every year. Sample agreements and simplified forms would be provided. There would be no fee. A transition period would allow employers time to get ministry approval before the law comes into effect. The ability to respond to the special or distinct needs of a particular industry through regulation would be restored.

The proposed legislation also deals with the issue of overtime averaging. Averaging has the potential to lower the amount of overtime pay employees might receive. We must ensure that employees are agreeing to overtime averaging for the right reasons, without undue pressure from their employer.

1400

The current act allows employees to agree to have their overtime hours averaged over a period of up to four weeks without Ministry of Labour approval. We are restoring the requirement that ministry approval be obtained for averaging of any overtime, a protection that had existed for decades before it was removed in the Employment Standards Act, 2000. Employees have the right to make an informed and effective choice.

These new protections will be supported by a new approach to awareness and enforcement. Two of the biggest obstacles to ensuring the act protects those it must are a lack of awareness of rights and responsibilities

by employees and employers, and a lack of enforcement of those rights and responsibilities.

First, we will be increasing awareness of the rights and responsibilities for both employers and employees. The overwhelming majority of employers either do or want to do the right thing. Many are not aware of their responsibilities, and it is not always easy to find out about them. We are developing a workplace portal which will provide easy-to-use information about workplace rights and responsibilities. This will ensure businesses can easily determine how to keep themselves in compliance with the act.

For employees, we recognize that many of the most vulnerable are recent arrivals to Ontario who are not aware of their rights. Many others speak a language other than English or French. Workers need basic information in a form they can use. We will develop information in different languages and then partner with community groups, legal clinics and others to make sure that the information is disseminated as widely as possible.

What about enforcement? What should we do when some refuse to comply? Rights without remedies will not be rights for long. Remedies that are not used are not remedies at all.

Both business groups and workers have told us that a new, more effective approach to enforcement of employment standards is long overdue. Such an approach would protect vulnerable workers and at the same time level the playing field for honest employers who comply with the rules.

The Employment Standards Act, 2000, contains many enforcement tools to ensure that the rights in the act are protected, but those tools are not being used as effectively as they could be. The result has been that those who need the act's protections may not always be getting them and those who comply with the act are often placed at a competitive disadvantage to those who choose not to.

To support the proposed hours-of-work legislation, and every other right in the Employment Standards Act, 2000, we are taking a different approach than has been followed. We are going to make sure that all the tools in the Employment Standards Act, 2000, are used, where appropriate, to ensure compliance. We have changed the dial. Enforcement is back in style.

In conclusion, the legislation introduced today will help us build a strong and prosperous Ontario by building an economy based on high skills and high standards.

We are proposing a set of rules for regulating hours of work that will work for everyone—employers and employees. We will support these proposed rules and every other protection in the Employment Standards Act, 2000, with new awareness initiatives and enhanced enforcement.

We are working toward building a strong and prosperous economy, one that will provide the people of Ontario with the highest quality of life that is second to none.

These are positive changes for all the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Responses?

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): If one were to read the papers and listen to the radio this morning and now listen to the Minister of Labour in this place, you would think that this is significant legislation. You'd think, in fact, that people have been obliged, have been forced, to work 60 hours a week over the past several years in Ontario. Nothing could be further from the truth. It's a disservice to the people of Ontario for this minister and this government to pretend that any employee in the province of Ontario—small business, big business—has been obliged to work 60 hours a week against their will since the Employment Standards Act was amended in 2000. That is wrong.

The minister talks about economic growth. Here's how you encourage economic growth, according to this Minister of Labour and this government: Bring back an old-fashioned, rubber-stamp-permit data system at the Ministry of Labour. Have a whole bunch of public servants on University Avenue at the Ministry of Labour doing what they used to do: rubber-stamping these permits week after week in industries where people need flexible hours, in small business and in large business. What a waste of resources: red tape upon tax increases. That's how you intend to grow the economy in the province of Ontario.

We lost 25,000 jobs in the province last month. The minister says he is concerned about economic growth. If he's concerned about economic growth, he ought to emulate the policies that we followed, that created in excess of a million net new jobs in Ontario. The Liberals have this patronizing attitude; that is, they know here at 400 University Avenue what's good for small business in the province of Ontario. They know what to say to someone in Thornhill or Sudbury or Thunder Bay or Haileybury. Tell them how to run their business. Give them another paper burden so that when they agree with their employees to work an extra few hours—a written agreement, which is the law now—it has to come to University Avenue in Toronto so someone can rubber-stamp it and send it back to the hard-working small business owners and small business workers in the province.

At what cost to taxpayers, Minister of Labour? It's certainly no benefit, but at what cost to taxpayers? The deal now, the arrangement now, is that if an employee is going to work more than 48 hours in a given week, the employer and the employee must agree in writing in order to do that. The system has worked well. I was talking to some of my colleagues here, asking them about the number of complaints they have had about this system.

Interjections: None.

Mr Flaherty: None. We hear nothing, because the system works—perhaps some complaints from the Ontario public service that positions that were involved in granting permits were eliminated, but it adds nothing to business and to economic growth in the province of Ontario.

Show some respect to small business. Small business is the engine of economic growth. More than half the

new jobs in Ontario in the last nine years have been created by small business. They don't need another burden. They don't need another form from the Ministry of Labour on University Avenue. What they need is some understanding of what they are obliged to do in order to make a living, to grow their businesses, to employ more people in the province, not an additional red tape burden.

Small business people work hard enough, and big business does too. I can remember visiting one of the large manufacturers in Ontario—I'm glad the Minister of Economic Development is here—and hearing from them about the paper burden with the Ministry of Labour's employment standards branch in the province of Ontario. Their employees wanted to have flexible hours. They wanted to work some overtime. It's one of the most important industries in the province. But no. This Minister of Labour says that his government wants to grow the economy, but they're putting this burden on small business and on large business across the province.

It's pseudo-reform; it's reform without meaning. It changes nothing in the lives of workers in the province of Ontario. It's a smokescreen. It is purely a creation of forms and permits. In fact, it's going back to 1985 and 1990, when we had all these forms and permits and where the Liberal mantra was—and it looks like it is again, with the largest single tax hike in the history of the province—"If it moves, tax it; if it slows down, subsidize it; if it stops, nationalize it."

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Responses?

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I feel compelled to respond.

The Speaker: If I could give you your proper time. Order.

1410

Mr Hampton: On behalf of New Democrats, I feel compelled to reply to what amounts to nothing more than media spin.

Under the Conservatives, workers could be coerced into working a 60-hour workweek. Now, under the Liberals, workers can be coerced into working a 60-hour workweek. All the employer needs to do is to say, "You work 60 hours or you'll be out of here." Then they sign and he sends in an application, but the application doesn't even have to be considered, because after 30 days it's automatic.

Under the Conservatives, we saw a whole lot of inspectors and enforcement officers at the employment standards branch laid off, so that the branch became quite ineffective in terms of being able to go out there and protect the rights of workers, particularly workers who don't have a union. Under the Liberals, are those same inspectors and enforcement officers coming back? No. The Liberals are going to follow the Conservative staffing plan, which means completely ineffective enforcement.

Under the Conservatives, an employer could deprive his workers of overtime pay simply by opting for averaging. Under the Liberals, he simply coerces his workers into signing and then files an application for

averaging of overtime pay, and the application doesn't even have to be considered. It's automatic after 30 days.

The Conservatives should be pleased today. What's happened here is that the Conservative regime of the 60-hour workweek has simply gotten a little Liberal-red wrapping paper but remains essentially the same. I thought for sure—I was hoping—the minister would be here today to tell us that the “just cause” provisions in the Employment Standards Act were going to be tightened up so that it would give workers some options when an employer tried to coerce them. I thought there would be some criteria in the bill which an employer would have to meet when he applies for longer overtime hours, that the alternatives like hiring new employees would have to be considered. Nothing like that is there. This is wide open.

I thought for sure there would be some provisions which ensured that workers were going to be paid their overtime pay, but this allows for the same kind of averaging, the same kind of deprivation of overtime pay that existed under the Conservatives.

The minister talks about enhanced enforcement, but when the minister talks about that, he should know that there is an existing backlog of 20,000 complaints at the employment standards branch of the Ministry of Labour. And do you know what most of those complaints involve? Complaints by workers: failure of the employer to pay wages, failure of the employer to pay overtime, failure of the employer to pay vacation pay.

The minister says he is going to become proactive. What is he going to do? Tell the 20,000 complainants who have already said, “I wasn't paid the wages that were due to me” to take a hike? Is that what you are going to do? You don't even have a strategy to deal with the backlog, never mind be proactive about future enforcement.

The government likes to talk about change, but the only thing that has changed here is a little bit of Liberal gift-wrapping on top of Conservative policy which was very damaging to workers. That is the only thing that has happened.

The other point that I want to raise is, what happens to a lot of lower-paid workers, a lot of workers who are working for minimum wage, who work in two jobs? Many of them do. What happens if the employer says, “You are going to work overtime here. Sign here. If you don't sign here, you're gone,” and then files the application, which no one needs to consider? What happens to those workers? Is there any protection for them in this bill? I don't see any. I don't see any protection at all.

A further point: The government says that somehow this is restoring the law to what it was. I wish the government had just restored the law to what it was under Bill Davis in 1980, but you don't even meet that test. You even fall short of that test here.

MEMBER'S CONDUCT

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): On Tuesday, April 20, 2004, the member for Erie-Lincoln, Mr Hudak, rose on a question of privilege concerning an incident

that occurred immediately after the adjournment of the House on Wednesday, April 14.

As members well know, just prior to the adjournment of the House on April 14, the Deputy Speaker was presiding over a recorded vote on a motion of non-confidence in the government. The atmosphere of the House at the time of the vote was raucous, and immediately after the vote, the Deputy Speaker made a statement to the House on the situation. However, emotions continued to run high after the ensuing adjournment of the House.

According to the member for Erie-Lincoln, it was at this time that the Deputy Speaker, who was in the under-gallery on his way out of the chamber, directed gestures and facial expressions toward him. The member was of the view that these gestures and expressions amounted to a contempt of the House, so he asked the Speaker to rule that a prima facie case of contempt exists.

The member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, Mr Barrett; the member for Niagara Centre, Mr Kormos; and government House leader, Mr Duncan also spoke to this matter.

Then, on April 22, the member for Essex, during a point of personal explanation, indicated to the House his position that what he was attempting to do at the time in question was invite the member for Erie-Lincoln behind the dais to discuss what had occurred during the vote that had just taken place.

I had an opportunity to reflect on this matter, and I am now going to rule. Since it is not appropriate to question the conduct, suitability or impartiality of the Chair on a point of privilege, which the member of Erie-Lincoln has acknowledged, I will address only the contempt issue in this ruling. Erskine May defines contempt in the following terms on pages 108, 117 and 120 of the 22nd edition:

“Generally speaking, any act or omission which obstructs or impedes either House of Parliament in the performance of its functions, or which obstructs or impedes any member or officer of such House in the discharge of his duty, or which has a tendency, directly or indirectly, to produce such results may be treated as a contempt even though there is no precedent of the offence. It is therefore impossible to list every act which might be considered to amount to a contempt, the power to punish for such an offence being of its nature discretionary....

“Indignities offered to the House by words spoken or writings published reflecting on its character or proceedings have been punished by both the Lords and the Commons upon the principle that such acts tend to obstruct the Houses in the performance of their functions by diminishing the respect due to them....

“Other acts besides words spoken or writings published reflecting upon either House or its proceedings which, though they do not tend directly to obstruct or impede either House in the performance of its functions, yet have a tendency to produce this result indirectly by bringing such House into odium, contempt or ridicule or by lowering its authority may constitute contempts.”

That is what Erskine May says on contempt.

In our own House, there have been several occasions on which a member has alleged that another member threatened or intimidated that member. For example, on December 5, 2000, a question of privilege was raised concerning an allegedly threatening and intimidating remark made by a minister to another member while the minister was leaving his seat in the chamber.

The Acting Speaker ruled, on page 6103 of the Hansard for that day as follows: "I understand there's a difference of opinion here as to what was and what wasn't said. None of what has been alleged to be said is on the record so we don't have the privileges of being able to take a look at that. I would ask all honourable members in this place to respect the privilege of each other, as we are expected to do or are wont to do or are understood to be doing when we're sent here by the electorate, and that in future we will act accordingly."

1420

Later the same day, a member rose on a point of order to indicate that during a recess for grave disorder, another member had crossed the floor and approached him at his desk in a physically intimidating and threatening manner. The Acting Speaker ruled, at page 6123 of the Hansard for that day, as follows:

"While all that happened, the House was in recess and I wasn't here. I have no reason to doubt the scenario you've painted. However, I would expect all members in this place, duly elected by their constituents, to assume to be honourable and that they would carry themselves in that manner in this place."

Finally, on October 23, 2001, a point of order was raised concerning a member's alleged challenge to another member as the former was leaving the chamber at the end of question period to meet him outside the chamber. The Speaker dealt with the point of order by indicating, at pages 2929 and 2930 of the Hansard for that day, as follows:

"I know that occasionally members do get rather heated in here. I'm sure the member will agree that the Sergeant at Arms does all he can. In circumstances like this, if members could realize that we are honourable members—and in fact on that particular occasion, it could have been a discussion taken outside. I would ask all members to act honourably, which I'm sure they will do."

I say to members of this House that in a proper case, threatening or intimidating behaviour by a member against another member can amount to a contempt of the House. In assessing whether the alleged behaviour in the case at hand establishes a prima facie case of contempt, I have to say that there are different ways to interpret what actually occurred. Indeed, these differences were reflected in the various submissions and statements that were made in the House concerning this question of privilege: What the member for Erie-Lincoln claims was threatening and intimidating conduct, the member for Essex claims was an invitation to explain a rule. The competing claims of the honourable members lead me to the view that in this case the Speaker is not in a position to make a

preliminary finding as to the nature and intention of the conduct in question. Therefore, I find that a prima facie case of contempt has not been made.

In closing, I want to thank the member for Erie-Lincoln, the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, the member for Niagara Centre, the government House leader and the member for Essex for their thoughtful and helpful contributions on this matter.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Mr Speaker, just very briefly, it's an unpleasant thing for the Speaker to have to consider a matter like this. I want to thank you for your consideration of the issues raised before you.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CLASS SIZE

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): My question is to the Premier. You have often said in this place that there are limited resources available budget-wise. On Thursday you announced in Richmond Hill that the government of Ontario would be imposing on local schools a hard cap of 20 students per class from kindergarten to grade 3. That has been costed by ministry officials at \$1.63 billion, which is more than the government plans to spend on education in total.

We know that you've had the Ontario public service cost your promises. My question to you today is, first of all, what is the cost of the hard cap of 20 students per class from K to grade 3 when it is fully implemented? Is it \$1.63 billion, as the ministry told us, or do you have another figure?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I'm very pleased to speak to this issue and to this question in particular. I will tell the member opposite that he can look forward to the budgetary details in the upcoming budget. But let me tell you this: We are absolutely determined to get class sizes down, in the early years in our public schools, to a maximum of 20 for the years JK to grade 3. That evolution will begin to take place this very September. I'll tell you why we believe it's so important: because we think our children deserve more individual attention so they might find greater success inside our schools. Only one half of Ontario children who are taking our standardized tests are meeting the Ontario standard when it comes to reading, writing and mathematics. So instead of investing in private schools, which the member opposite was a champion for, we are going to invest in our public schools for our students to enjoy success.

Mr Flaherty: The question to the Premier was not a complicated one. It was, how much? The people of Ontario did not get an answer.

We know the Liberal platform said that the cost would be something like \$375 million, and we know that's wrong. We know that in September, for example, the York Region District School Board figured it would cost

them \$50 million, and the York region Catholic board, \$20 million—a lot of this money to be spent on portables and that kind of thing, not on literacy and on numeracy in our schools. That's \$70 million in just one region of Ontario, which shows how unreasonable, how foolish the figure is being used by the Premier of Ontario.

We also have a commitment from this government to fulfill the Rozanski recommendations, at a cost of \$1.6 billion. They are now going to spend all of that on one ideological commitment to a hard cap. Will the Premier confirm that he intends in this mandate to fulfill all of the recommendations of the Rozanski report?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I will not apologize for this government investing in the future of Ontario by investing in our children. I'll tell you why this investment is so desperately called for. During the course of the last eight years, we've had a 40% increase in private school enrolment. We've had 200 new private schools open in the province of Ontario, whereas 400 public schools have been closed. It is estimated that as many as 25% of our high school students will be dropping out of school. To us on this side of the House, those figures are unacceptable.

Just as this member was committed to investing in private schools, we on this side of the House are committed to investing in better public schools for all our children.

Mr Flaherty: I suggest to the Premier that his government and he himself have not thought this through. How does it help literacy in grades 8, 9 and 10 when they may have larger classes because of this commitment of in excess of \$1.6 billion? How does it help students in K through grade 3 to be put out in the schoolyard in portables? It's going backwards.

How does it help a principal, who is trying to be flexible managing his or her school, when the 21st student walks in the door in grade 2, having to go hire another teacher, having to get a portable, having perhaps split classes between grade 2 and grade 3? This is not progress. This is retrograde in Ontario. It is an ideological commitment by this Premier to an artificial hard cap.

What I say to the Premier is, go and consult with the principals of the local grade schools in the province. Will you commit to have an open public consultation with all of the principals of the public schools in the province of Ontario?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I do not underestimate the extent of the challenge before us, but we're bringing something to this task that was sorely lacking in our predecessors. We're bringing commitment. We're bringing energy. We're bringing dedication. We're bringing a sincere desire to do what is needed for the benefit of our students.

It may be that they don't vote. It may be that they are not a powerful lobby group. It may be that they don't phone us, write us and stand outside on the front lawn here at Queen's Park, but we believe that it's in their interest and in the interest of our province's future that

we support public schools. We will never apologize for that.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. I was just wondering if you were ready for your second question.

New question.

1430

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Premier. Could you tell us in this House, could you tell school boards, could you tell parents, could you tell superintendents across this province how many teachers you're going to hire?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I will hire as many teachers as are necessary to ensure that we have a cap of 20 students in classes from JK through grade 3 by the end of our term. My advice to the member opposite and his colleagues would be to focus on the number that is of interest to parents and a benefit to students. It has to do with the number 20. It has to do with what should be a real cap on class sizes from JK to grade 3. That is the number that motivates us, that is the number that inspires us and that is the number on which we will deliver.

Mr Klees: I'd like you to be a little more specific. Did you not say on September 16, "We're going to hire over 1,000 new teachers annually," and "We've accounted for it in our plan"? Did you not say that?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I'm not sure what part of the number 20 the member opposite does not understand or is failing to grasp. Twenty is the number that is important to our schools, to our students and to our parents. At the end of the day we will employ as many teachers as are necessary in order for us to achieve that number. That is the number we are focused on.

Mr Klees: Speaking of focus, I'd like to speak about what you said on Graham Richardson's Focus Ontario this past Saturday. Will you admit to this House that you misspoke yourself when you told Graham Richardson that he was wrong about the number that he said you had committed to? Will you publicly apologize to Graham Richardson and the people of Ontario today?

Hon Mr McGuinty: If the member has an appetite for numbers, in addition to ensuring that we have 20 students per classroom from JK through grade 3, I was also very pleased to announce that in each elementary school in Ontario we are going to have lead teachers. Our goal, ultimately, is to have four lead teachers, specially trained, in every elementary school. It has never been done before. They will be specially trained in the delivery of literacy and numeracy to ensure that our students can achieve a standard that we know they're capable of achieving, that our province is worthy of.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Last week you flitted around the province with your so-called new vision speeches. But the people of Ontario are still asking questions about your last vision speeches of seven months ago, during the

election campaign. You had this vision that was called the Liberal election platform.

You must remember the vision of stopping development on the Oak Ridges moraine. That didn't happen. You must remember your vision of rolling back the tolls on Highway 407. That didn't happen. You must remember your vision that you were going to maintain the hydro rate freeze. That didn't happen. Premier, given your failure on all of those visions, why should people believe any of your so-called new visions?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I want to focus for a moment on the education announcement that we made last week. The question I would have for the leader of the NDP is, what part of our commitments does he not support with respect to education? Does he not support the investment of \$112 million we made into schools to help struggling students? Does he not support the restoration of democracy we brought to Toronto and a couple of other school boards? Does he not support our tuition freeze? And why did he not support our getting rid of the private school tax credit? Why did he vote against that?

We have made significant steps on the matter of public education, on the matter of medicare, and we look forward to doing so much more as our term unfolds.

Mr Hampton: Let's talk about your education vision, which I think is more aptly called a revision.

On September 16, 2003, you said, "We are going to hire over 1,000 teachers, new teachers, on an annual basis." That's 5,000 new teachers, you said, over the term. This weekend on Focus Ontario, Mr Richardson asked you about that and you said, "You're mistaken." You tried to deny that. Then, of course, Mr Richardson produced a video clip of your lips moving and you saying those exact words.

When you can't even be accountable on what you said six months ago, how can people believe what you are saying now?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I say to my friend opposite, is that really the best he can do when so much is at stake in the matter of public education? I said we will hire as many teachers as are necessary in order for us to achieve our goal of a maximum number of 20 students per year from JK through to grade 3. That's what it's all about.

What I would have expected from the member opposite was his support at least for our getting rid of the private school tax credit in Ontario. I would have expected that at a minimum. I would have expected him to jump up today and say, "Yes, I'm with you when it comes to 20 students, I'm with you when it comes to having lead teachers inside our elementary schools and I'm with you when it comes to your support for public education at long last." Those are the kinds of expressions of support that I would have expected from the member opposite.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): New question.

Mr Hampton: I suspect we are going to get lots of other video clips where the lips moved and you promised this and you failed to deliver.

Let's talk about your health vision. Remember your vision to put an end to P3 hospitals? You didn't do that. Remember your vision to hire 8,000 new nurses? We've got less than 800. Remember your vision to extend IBI autism treatment to kids over age six? Apparently that was a hallucination as well.

Premier, I ask you again: When you have already broken all these promises on health care, why should people put any faith in your so-called revision that you announced last week?

Hon Mr McGuinty: On the matter of health care, I took the opportunity last week before a convention of the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario to let them know that we are going to assume our leadership responsibilities in Canada when it comes to championing and defending medicare. I also indicated that Premier Campbell and myself have agreed that we will host a meeting of all the health care ministers for Canada. At that point in time we will come together, and ultimately we will meet with the Prime Minister with a view to ensuring that we bring a constructive, positive tone to the debate for health care as it unfolds in Canada. Our ultimate objective here is to secure, it is true, better financing from the federal government, but at the same time to ensure that not only Ontario but all provinces continue to benefit from a strong Canada Health Act and that we all continue to devote ourselves to the precepts of medicare.

1440

Mr Hampton: Last week, you said you and Mr Charest were going to lead; this week it's you and Mr Campbell from British Columbia. Would this be the same Mr Campbell who is privatizing every health service he can get his hands on in British Columbia? Would this be the same Jean Charest who is overwhelmingly unpopular in Quebec because he is trying to do the same thing? Premier, that's not much of a vision. That sounds like a nightmare.

But I want to remind you of another vision you had, a vision to cut auto insurance premiums by 10% to 20%. Now, when drivers across Ontario open up the notice, they get a 10% or 20% increase. Premier, when all of your visions over the last seven months have turned into revisions and nightmares, why should the people of Ontario trust any of your most recent visions?

Hon Mr McGuinty: We put out a number of important statements and announcements last week that spoke to some of our most pressing and urgent priorities, including the need for all of us to take responsibility when it comes to conserving electricity, and including the need for us, as a society frankly, to invest in public education, not only for purposes of enlightened self-interest but also because we sense an obligation toward our children.

I also took the opportunity last week to talk about medicare and the unfolding debate across the country, and to insert ourselves and assert ourselves as leaders in the nation when it comes to this particular issue. I have said on behalf of the people of Ontario that the position we will be bringing to this national debate is one that advocates and continues to champion medicare.

I believe that is the kind of vision the people of Ontario want laid before them, and we look forward to articulating more and more specifics as the days unfold.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): My question is to the Premier. In your absence last Thursday, I put a question to the Acting Premier, the Minister of the Environment. As an Ottawa MPP, you will know that the previous government committed \$85 million to four-laning Highway 7 between Carleton Place and Highway 417. For more than six months now, your environment minister has failed to make a decision on a routine—some would say minor—environmental question related to the four-laning work.

My question to the minister was about this delay. In response, your environment minister delivered an entirely inappropriate reply. She indicated a personal grudge against me and suggested she intended to take her animosity out on my constituents. I have grown a pretty thick skin over the last 26 years I've sat here, and I expect that those attacks might come. But I cannot stand for the notion that your environment minister is putting forward; that is, she is making the ministry her personal fiefdom, rendering decisions based on personal feelings and preferences. My constituents have a right—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you. Premier.

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The minister informed the Legislature subsequent to this exchange that she had misspoken. She intended to say that she would in fact be providing better service, and that is exactly what she is doing.

I understand that certain things can be said in the heat of debate here, but let me assure you of this: I have a perspective on the minister's work ethic and performance that the members opposite do not have by virtue of our proximity, working together in cabinet. This minister is absolutely dedicated to providing good, quality public service, to standing up for the environment and doing the very best she can. I feel very confident in the approaches she's taking on behalf of the people of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Let's settle down here. Supplementary.

Mr Sterling: I ask the Premier to read Hansard and draw his conclusions from Hansard.

As an Ottawa MPP, you will know the tragic toll that Highway 7 has taken. In our part of the province we all know of someone who has been killed along this stretch of highway. I'm told by one of my municipal councillors that at a recent ROMA conference your transportation minister said that you, Mr Premier, would make the final decision on which highway projects go ahead. Will you indicate today that your government will fulfill the province's already announced \$85-million commitment to fund the four-laning of Highway 7 between Carleton Place and Highway 417, and will you ensure that the

Ministry of the Environment deals with this minor decision very soon?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I would not categorize this decision as being minor. I think it's an important decision and should be given the time that is necessary to ensure that it's addressed in a responsible way. I know that the member opposite would be pleased with the announcement we made today in connection with the 417. We look forward to speaking to other announcements in connection with other highways.

The member makes a good point about the safety issues connected with Highway 7, and I commend him for raising this issue here on behalf of our fellow constituents in eastern Ontario. I recognize that it's an important issue, and we look forward to moving ahead on that score at some point.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): My question is to the Minister of Energy. Last week our government committed to creating a culture of conservation, working to propel Ontarians to become leaders in North America in terms of energy conservation.

In my riding of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, I attended the General Vanier Intermediate School to discuss energy conservation and to distribute energy-efficient light bulbs. As well, I attended the Raisin Region Conservation Authority's Earth Day at the Gray's Creek Conservation Area, where they provided spruce seedlings to residents.

Minister, recently you gave a speech outlining several initiatives to reform Ontario's electricity sector. Ontarians would agree that the vitality of our electricity system is essential to our province's prosperity. Can you explain how this plan will benefit the economy and the environment in Ontario?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): We have outlined a balanced plan that we believe will return an element of stability to the electricity sector that has been missing. Bill 35 did not work, did not reduce prices for electricity, did not create new supply and did not improve reliability of supply.

As we began this process, we outlined the broad parameters. I intend to be bringing in legislation later this session that will put that into even greater focus. We believe that creating stability in this industry is first and foremost. We believe this is the right step to take. It is one of a number of steps that must be taken to undo the problems that were created by the previous government.

Mr Brownell: Minister, during the past Tory regime Ontarians became reliant on price-capped power and a sense of artificial reliance on the government's ability to provide cheap, reliable power. As a province, we now understand the strains on our electricity system and the reality that we must conserve in order to ensure the lights will stay on.

I think we all agree that we need to develop new sources of electricity supply. Can you tell us how our government's plan will enable this now and in the future?

Hon Dwight Duncan: By 2020, factoring in growth in our economy, we need to replace approximately 80% of our existing generation. It's a huge undertaking that could turn out to be the largest infrastructure undertaking in the history of not only this province but also the country.

I am most pleased that our plans have been endorsed by the Ontario Clean Air Alliance; the Consumers Council of Canada, the Dominion Bond Rating Service Ltd, the Electricity Distributors Association, Standard and Poor's, the Association of Power Producers of Ontario, the Central Ontario Energy Alliance, the Canadian Energy Efficiency Alliance, and CanSIA, the Canadian Solar Industries Association.

Our plan represents a balanced plan to move forward, a plan that we readily acknowledge will need to be reformed and changed as time goes on to accommodate changing needs and changing demands. But this is a step we, as a province, must and will take. Premier McGuinty and his government are showing leadership in this vital—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): New question.

1450

WATER QUALITY

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): Premier, I want to congratulate you, and obviously that hasn't been what's going on. In your quest to find more tax dollars, I see you have found a way to tax our churches. Before you became Premier, of course, they were exempt from taxation.

Because of the drinking water regulations, many rural community churches can no longer afford to operate. In rural Ontario, these churches are often places where child care and community programs are delivered. Now that these churches will not be able to afford to operate, these communities will be losing their gathering places and the services that these churches have been providing. Premier, what are Ontario's rural families to do now that your taxation is taking away their ability to deliver programming and support from their rural churches?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): My understanding is that we're merely delivering on a Tory government regulation which they wholeheartedly supported when they sat in government. Perhaps in his supplementary the member could indicate why it was such a good idea on this side, but now that he's on that side, apparently he's not in favour of it.

Mr Hardeman: I appreciate the answer, Premier, and I will tell you just that. How it's being implemented is in fact why it is hurting our churches.

Premier, I have an ultraviolet system on the well, my water system, at home. That system is considered great protection for me and my family and for the safety of the guests who come to my home. The church down the road

used the same UV system to ensure safe drinking water for the people who use their facility. The difference is that because of your regulation, those places need to pay engineers from \$15,000 to \$20,000 to tell them that what they are doing is the right thing to do—money they don't have and that is well beyond their ability to raise.

Premier, will you support our rural communities and recall this regulation until you've put a plan in place that will accommodate recommendation 84 of the O'Connor report, which says you will provide funding if the costs are too high for these systems to endure?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I know the Minister of the Environment has more detail.

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I think it would have been appropriate if the member opposite had made those very points before regulation 170 had been passed by the previous government. We have inherited a flawed regulation. There is no question that when I met with over 40 municipal representatives at ROMA, it was a common, recurring theme that regulation 170 was presenting significant problems for them across rural Ontario, particularly for church groups and other charitable organizations that access small community facilities. I have committed to have staff look at regulation 170. They are going to bring me recommendations to improve the regulation so that people across Ontario will be able to maintain these facilities.

RENT BANK PROGRAMS

Ms Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Last week we heard a question with regard to the new provincial rent bank, the \$10 million in assistance for tenants who are at risk of losing their homes due to unforeseen circumstances. Minister, could you please clarify to this House and to my constituents how the rent bank is going to work?

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): First of all, I'd like to thank the member for the question and just indicate to her and other members of the House that the \$10-million rent bank this government put in place is good news for tenants who are at risk, either through an emergency situation, ill health or losing their jobs, so that they can get up to two months' rent to help them during those tough times.

We are living up to a campaign promise. Not only are we helping the tenants involved who will benefit from this program but, more than that, we are also helping our municipalities to defray the otherwise more expensive social service costs they would have to implement in the event that these tenants were actually evicted. So this is a good-news story for everybody: for our municipalities and for the tenants who may need this program.

Ms Mossop: It actually has been recognized as a good-news story, as the minister mentioned. There was a headline in the Ottawa Sun, "Rent Bank Plan is Right on

the Money,” and there were others in the Spec. But there is still some confusion for the municipalities as to exactly how they are going to be able to administer this. Can you explain that to them?

Hon Mr Gerretsen: I'd be more than pleased to answer that to this member. She has a very good question there.

First of all, municipalities can charge up to 10% of the money that's actually been allocated to them for administrative costs. Basically, what we are trying to do is assist those municipalities that already have rent banks. I might say that 82% of the people of Ontario are already covered by a service provider that in effect has a rent bank in place. We will simply be adding this money to the existing rent banks, so whatever the rules and regulations are in those municipalities will in effect be applicable to the rent bank situation. This can either be delivered through the service providers themselves or through some agency. Once again, it's good news for those tenants who need help in an emergency situation. We look forward to covering 100% of the province as soon as the other 18% who aren't currently covered come on stream.

TORONTO POLICE SERVICE

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have a question to the Premier. Today, four Toronto officers were charged with 14 offences under the Police Services Act. The charges are connected to money laundering and car theft. There are yet more allegations around protection of drug depots and shaking down of business owners by officers of 52 division who also are now being investigated. Months ago, there were charges of extortion, perjury, theft and assault against members of the drug squad.

As Mayor Miller said, Torontonians are proud of their police services, but this series of incidents and allegations reveals a very disturbing pattern, and we're very worried about it. The public needs to be able to trust its police force, and our good police officers need to be able to trust each other. I'm asking you today, Premier, will you call a public inquiry into these incidents so that confidence can be restored?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The minister will speak to this.

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): The member should know, and I'm sure she does, that all police forces in Ontario are covered by the Police Services Act. The Police Services Act provides for police services boards and gives responsibilities to the chiefs to administer their police forces, with the ability and authority to discipline from a human resources point of view, criminal charges, all of those things. At the present time it seems to me, given the announcement today by the chief of police of Toronto, that he is exercising his authority and his responsibility by announcing that those charges are being made.

The other thing that I think you should know, when you talk about this “trend” and this “disturbing situation,” is that we are talking about very, very few officers—very few—and we're talking about a police force that has 7,000 members. Do the math on it and figure out what we're talking about. I have the utmost confidence in the police services board and in the police chief and in what they're doing, and they're doing what they're supposed to do: exercising their authority.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Supplementary?

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): Minister, I have equal confidence with you in the police chief and in the 7,000 officers of this great city, but I think the people of Toronto want to know that the province is—that you as the minister are—prepared to investigate if investigation is called for. They want to know from you, as the minister, if broader changes are needed to prevent this kind of misconduct in the future. They know that the province has the tools and the ability to make it happen. What they want to hear from you, and they want to hear it from you today, is, will you take the responsibility to call a public inquiry?

Hon Mr Kwinter: The member is not quite correct in what he is saying. I do not have the authority to go in and investigate a police force. If the chief feels—and he's done it in the past, and there's ample history in other municipalities in Ontario—that he is being compromised to the point where it would be advisable for him to bring in another police force to do that investigation, whether it be another municipal police force, the OPP or the RCMP, he has the authority to do that. Obviously, he doesn't feel that that stage has been reached. Today he announced that charges are being laid. I think the people of Ontario and the people of Toronto should have confidence that the problem has been identified and is being addressed.

1500

HEALTH CARE

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): My question today is to the Minister of Health, and it involves the many mixed messages this government is sending out with regard to health care costs. This week-end's mixed message was delivered by your Premier, who said on Friday in his speech to the RAO that he intended to reduce the growth curve in health care spending and that your budget will speak to that. Can you inform the House today, and all Ontarians, just how you intend to accomplish this goal in your budget?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): We have been very clear, but I'm happy to say it one more time for the member. It's a message that I have been communicating for many months, in particular to Ontario's hospitals, which is to say that, with respect, the 10% increases for the last five years in the hospital budget—which is, at \$11 billion, the largest line item in the government's budget—are not increases that are sustainable.

In exchange, what we've said to Ontario's hospitals is that more modest rates of growth will be necessary. But

the other part of the formula that we're very committed to is making enhancements in those complementary health care services at the community level, such as meaningful primary care reform, home care that works, long-term care facilities that give us confidence for our loved ones who live there.

It's true, our government was elected. Over the course of its mandate we fully intend to deliver on the commitment that we made, which is to enhance the quality—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms Scott: I thank the minister for stressing more investment in community health care; that is needed. But many of my constituents are afraid your government's going to reduce spending by charging user fees for drugs to seniors, shortchanging long-term-care facilities, curbing hospital budgets and underpaying doctors. Which of these methods do you feel is the most appropriate way to, as your Premier put it, reduce the growth curve in health care spending?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The honourable member, in her question, raises a number of issues, but the assurance I can provide to her is that this party and this government will continue to make investments in health care, to build on a system which we think is a high-quality system. We've made a commitment to the people of the province of Ontario to enhance it, and I mentioned in my earlier response some of those areas where we intend to be able to make targeted investments.

I think the message that we send from this place today to the people of the province of Ontario is that we intend, as a government, to build on health care, to enhance the quality of the health care system that has been built in this province to date. But in order to make that sustainable, we ask in particular that our hospitals, which have been experiencing double-digit increases for the last five years, work with us to restrain that growth in such a fashion that we can make those investments in complementary community-based services. Those have the effect over time of taking some of the pressure off our hospitals, which have been asked to do too much by some of the failures at the community-based level.

TOURISM

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): My question is for the Minister of Tourism and Recreation. Tourism in Toronto plummeted last year after the outbreak of SARS. Hotels experienced a 50% reduction in occupancy. Restaurants were doing 20% to 30% less business. Theatre attendance was dwindling. More than 800 bus tours were cancelled, and major conventions were held elsewhere outside the province. Minister, as we head into warmer weather and the peak of tourist season, what is your ministry doing to ensure Toronto is open for business to tourists around the world?

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): That's an excellent question, I must say to the member. The government is committed, through a program he may be familiar with—the tourism recovery

program—to revitalizing Toronto and Ontario to what we'd call first-class destinations. My ministry has made a number of investments recently in the marketing of the city of Toronto to potential visitors from around the world: \$3.5 million in advertising and marketing for Toronto and Niagara as tourist destinations; playing a partnership in the city of Toronto's branding exercise, from which a new image for the city will emerge; and our continued investment in such events as the Beaches jazz festival.

I'm glad the member's question touched on the area of conventions. Last week I was speaking with Meeting Professionals International, which entices conventions to Toronto. This government recognizes the importance of the convention industry. That is why the Ministry of Tourism and Recreation allocated \$2.6 million to Tourism Toronto's convention development—an additional \$250,000. All kinds of conventions are coming to Toronto as a result—

Mr Berardinetti: I also want to point out that not only did SARS affect tourism in Toronto, but as a gateway to Ontario, it affected tourism across the province. As we all know, our great province houses many diverse and unique attractions. What initiatives are in place by your ministry to ensure that visitors this summer will continue to travel across the province, whether it is enjoying the Stratford Film Festival, going fishing or kayaking in the Kawarthas, or experiencing the blend of French and English culture in our nation's capital?

Hon Mr Bradley: I found some statistics on this, in fact. Last Wednesday, CFPL News did a piece on a new initiative to revitalize Chatham-Kent's tourism industry. The city is investing a quarter of a million dollars in a new campaign aimed at day trippers, extolling the virtues and events of Chatham-Kent. More than half the funding comes from the Ministry of Tourism and Recreation.

Last Thursday in Sault Ste Marie, at the second annual tourism awards dinner, my parliamentary assistant, Tim Peterson, announced marketing funding of \$150,000 for the Soo.

St Jacobs Country, near Kitchener-Waterloo, will be receiving \$150,000 in marketing support to promote the area and its attractions.

Finally, the Ministry of Tourism and Recreation will continue to produce Ontario's experience guides in both official languages to serve as a consumer guide in trip planning for tourists, informing all potential visitors, and reminding those who have visited Ontario before, about a wide variety of attractions and activities available to them in the province.

If the opposition has any further questions, I'd be pleased to provide more information.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question today is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Recently, as you know, the two-hatter issue has been a very important issue in rural Ontario, as has the loss of volunteer firefighters. As we

know, it affects community safety. Minister, can you inform this House when your new mediation-before-legislation process will begin and, more importantly, can you inform us who will conduct the mediation?

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): The member has asked this question several times. If this issue could be easily resolved, that party, when they were in government, would have resolved it. They even had one of their members bring in a private member's bill, and their own party defeated it.

What we have is a situation where there's obviously a problem. I've already been told that the Adams report is not acceptable, that they are not prepared to sit down and do a mediation. My challenge is to come up with a structured mediation so that going into this mediation they will know what the parameters are. We are working on that. We are finalizing that. Once we get that finalized, we will appoint a mediator to do it, and hopefully we will come to a solution that will do what my major challenge and my major goal is: to provide safety for all the citizens of Ontario.

Mr Dunlop: Thank you very much for your response. When Minister Runciman was awaiting the recommendations of the report by Justice George Adams, a moratorium was in place to avoid the further loss of any of the professional firefighters on the volunteer fire services, a moratorium that was lifted very shortly after your election. Minister, will you endeavour to reinstate the moratorium until the outcome of the mediation is complete?

Hon Mr Kwinter: There are ongoing discussions with all the parties. The fire marshal is absolutely key to this whole exercise, because it is his responsibility to make sure the people of Ontario have adequate fire protection. I am in touch with him on a regular basis, he is in touch with the parties and, as I say, we will get this resolved.

CLASS SIZE

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): My question is for the Minister of Education. As you know, the Premier made a very important and, I believe, historic announcement last week about education. Inside that announcement, he referred to the cap on the class size for JK to grade 3 at 20 starting this fall.

In my conversations with educational leaders in my riding, they support the direction, they support the concept and they understand why we're doing so, but they do have some concerns and issues. One of them is, what are the criteria for determining what schools will see this cap first, and what can my constituents expect to see as a reduction in the class sizes throughout the province?

1510

Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): There's no question that there is interest and enthusiasm in the education community and, I think, fairly spoken, in

parents and others in what we can start to do right away for students in this province. What we have said is that we're very clear on the end point: We are going to have 20 kids in a classroom from JK to 3. But we're working with our partners, which are the school boards, in terms of making sure that this isn't—we've learned very well the dangers of one-size-fits-all education policy. What we've said to the boards is we want to see where the students are most overcrowded, where they're having the most academic challenges, because that's what this is about: helping those children do well.

Other than that, we're going to work with the boards. They come up with the plans. They are going to be able to submit to fit this intention, so instead of making all the children of this province fit the policies coming from the provincial government, the policies of the provincial government will, for once, fit the children of this province.

Mr Levac: Thank you very much, Minister. I understand and I know they're looking forward to working with you to achieve that goal and they understand the realities of the day. So I'm looking forward to that.

The Premier has also made reference to targeting goals of having 75% of our 12-year-olds meet the provincial standard in literacy and numeracy by 2008. What resources will the government provide this very ambitious target? The same educational leaders are asking the tough questions about how you resource something that's as difficult to achieve as you've set out in this target.

Hon Mr Kennedy: Part of our outlook is certainly to have the smaller class sizes, but not just class sizes. There's not magic in the size of the class. The magic is in giving the children in those classes individualized attention; so supporting teacher training.

We're going to have something that has not been tried at all in this jurisdiction, and it's unfortunate, because we've had years and years of evidence, millions of dollars spent on tests showing us that kids are struggling. So we're going to have, for the first time, two lead teachers—one in literacy, one in numeracy—specially trained with time available to lead the effort in each elementary school—over 16,000 specially trained teachers.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): Bureaucracy.

Hon Mr Kennedy: Not bureaucracy, as one of the member opposite tries to suggest, but in fact in the schools, helping to teach kids, giving them the advantages they were denied by the previous government. This is something we know how to do. It's been done; unfortunately, only in some communities, in some schools. The difference under a McGuinty government that is it will be made available to every elementary student in this province, and every one of them will be able to access their future through this strategy.

ENBRIDGE GAS

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Energy. The Supreme Court of Canada has unanimously ruled that Enbridge Gas charged criminal interest rates of its gas customers in

Ontario. It ordered Enbridge to pay back close to \$100 million because, as Mr Justice Frank Iacobucci said, criminals “should not be permitted to keep the proceeds of their crime.”

But imagine the surprise of Ontario natural gas consumers when they learned that Enbridge intends to ask the Ontario Energy Board to allow them to pass this \$100-million cost on to all the gas consumers in Ontario. In other words, Enbridge wants the gas consumers to pay for its criminal conduct.

Will you pass a regulation or a policy directive this week telling the Ontario Energy Board that the shareholders of Enbridge should pay for the criminal conduct, not the gas consumers of Ontario?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): The member had a chance to review both the Peel court decision as well as the Supreme Court decision, and the member quotes accurately from those decisions. The Ontario Energy Board has a legislated mandate to protect consumers, and I expect the Ontario Energy Board to fulfill its mandate.

Mr Hampton: We’ve seen before where the energy board needs some directive from the Minister of Energy. When you were in opposition, you were quite prepared to give that direction.

For example, only a year ago you demanded that the Ernie Eves government issue a policy directive under section 27(1) of the Ontario Energy Board act disallowing retroactive rate hikes. That was your position then.

Minister, that’s exactly what’s going on here. The company has been found criminally in breach of the law. It had to pay a \$100 million. Now they want to go to the Ontario Energy Board and say, “Will you allow us a rate increase to cover the \$100 million in criminal conduct?” That’s a retroactive rate increase. Your position a year ago was, “Pass a policy directive.” Can you tell us why you wouldn’t pass a policy directive now, since it was so appropriate a year ago?

Hon Mr Duncan: The member opposite forgot an important part of that debate. First of all, after NDP Finance Minister Floyd Laughren approved the retroactive Union Gas hike, we asked first for the Ontario Energy Board to make a decision; that is, to fulfill its decision. The Ontario Energy Board, under the leadership of Floyd Laughren, refused to do that. I was astounded at the member’s silence at that time on that issue and couldn’t understand why he would be so silent at that time on that particular issue.

Let me re-emphasize for the member opposite and for the Ontario Energy Board: The Ontario Energy Board has a legislated mandate from this assembly to protect consumers. The minister expects them to fulfill their mandate, unlike Mr Laughren, the NDP finance minister in the Union Gas situation.

WATER QUALITY

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): My question today is for the Minister of Tourism and

Recreation—it’s a busy day for the minister. The last time I asked you a question, it was with regard to the punishing McGuinty McMeal tax. I recall that a few days after, they got rid of that tax. I’m hoping that you will use your seniority and influence in this government to go to bat for the tourism industry in rural Ontario once again.

My colleague has talked about churches and the tremendous hardship that regulation 170/03 is going to have on them and community halls. I also want to talk about campgrounds and tent and trailer parks. Some of these businesses are threatened with extinction because of these regulations. Will you as a minister go to your cabinet table and stand up for the tourism industry in this province and fight for them with regard to implementation of rule 170/03 so that our tourism industry is not injured irreparably?

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): As I said to my friend for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke last week—he was speculating about a potential tax out there. I said that when I was in opposition I used to speculate about those taxes as well. I knew that the Treasurer of the day would never tell me what was going to be in the budget. You don’t fearmonger. Others may; you don’t fearmonger, but the concerns you expressed were unnecessary concerns because that’s not there.

You’ve addressed another issue that is, I think, of some importance, and I will certainly be discussing that with all of my colleagues to see how we can best deal with this issue. It is a regulation, as he will know, that was brought in by, I think, the Honourable Chris Stockwell or the Honourable Elizabeth Witmer. I know that they would have given consideration to the economic ramifications of these regulations before they brought them in. They wouldn’t possibly have simply brought them in, left them on the table and not had those considerations. So I’m prepared to explore that with my colleagues to see what can be done.

Mr Yakabuski: The minister will well know that regulations and legislation are brought in, but the true effects, the far-reaching ramifications of that legislation, are not really felt until implementation comes along. These regulations are now being implemented on your government’s watch. You have the power to make changes. Recommendation 84 of the O’Connor report says that we will assist those people who don’t have the funds to commit to these regulations. Will you see that recommendation 84 is, in fact, adhered to by this Ministry of the Environment?

Hon Mr Bradley: I would agree with the member that this government has to undo a lot of things that the previous government did. He knows I take his representations seriously today, but I look at the front benches—and it’s not your fault, because you weren’t a member at that time—and wonder who didn’t think of the fact that there would be a cost assigned to this. I thought a former Treasurer, for instance my friend Mr Flaherty—someone else would have made provision in the budgetary plans, well into the future, to consider this particular imposition,

which of course from an environmental point of view is absolutely essential but also has a cost to go with it.

I know that the Premier has said that all the recommendations in regard to the O'Connor commission are going to be implemented. They are essential to implement. We'll try to do them as fairly as possible. I'll share your thoughts with my colleagues.

1520

BEEF PRODUCERS

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture and Food. As you are aware, I'm proud to represent the most productive agricultural riding in Ontario. Beef is one of the largest animal commodity groups in my riding.

Since the US closed the border to Canadian beef and other ruminants 11 months ago, the pressure on cattle and dairy farmers in my riding have increased daily. They worry about being able to sustain their farms and their livelihood. They worry about being able to not only feed their herds but their families as well. For the farmers of Perth-Middlesex, the border must be reopened. What have you done to address the border issue?

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): We've been working very hard. We've been dealing with state legislators; we attended a conference in January dealing with state legislators. We've been to Washington. We've talked to agriculture commissioners from across the United States. We've met with the USDA. As well, we've taken part in the tri-national NAFTA accord, trying to make sure that the message got through to both the United States and Mexico that this is an issue that needs to be based on science. We cannot allow the emotions of politics to get in the way.

We've been very active in trying to move this issue forward. We saw a good first step last week by the United States, but truly the only thing that is going to help this industry, turn it around and set it in the right direction for the future is the reopening of the full border and the resumption of the trade of live cattle. That's what we're going to continue to advocate for.

Mr Wilkinson: I know that the farmers in my riding are thankful for all your efforts on an issue that can be construed as being primarily federal. I recently read a report that stated that the Canadian cattle industry is overly dependent on cross-border trade. In Perth-Middlesex, the cattle industry currently relies on exports. What are you doing to address this issue?

Hon Mr Peters: First and foremost, we've been working very closely with the cattle industry. I think it's important that the Ministry of Agriculture and Food recognize the need to work together. We have done that. We've worked very closely with the Ontario Cattlemen's Association, the Dairy Farmers of Ontario, the Canadian Livestock Genetics Association and, quite honestly, other ruminants. I think a lot of people focus in on this as a beef issue, but many other sectors in the agricultural economy have been affected by this: deer, goats and

sheep, to name a few. We need to continue to work with them.

As well, we've been investing. Right now we're in the process of trying to develop some new slaughter capacity in this province. We have an extreme shortage of slaughter capacity. The mature animal program is going to help ensure that we have a new program in place. The best thing that citizens can do is make that conscious decision in the grocery store: Eat beef; choose a Canadian product.

DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): My question is to the Premier. Two years ago in the provincial budget there was a five-year commitment made to help Ontarians with developmental disabilities. It was a program designed to increase funding annually by \$197 million. It's something that's incredibly important. Health care and education may top the agenda for public priorities, but these people depend on you and your government, and on all of us in this House, to speak up for them.

Premier, would you stand if your place and confirm to the people of Ontario and to those advocates, those associations for community living across the province, that you'll maintain these funding increases that were to be phased in over five years. Would you do that?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I know the minister would like to speak to this.

Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I'm very pleased to answer this question. Let me tell you the difference between your government, when you were the government, and this government. We just announced \$24 million for places to live in our communities, and those places have already started being built. As a matter of fact, the first ones should be ready by June this year.

Here's the big difference: you guys were great at making announcements; this government is good at action.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): That's the end of oral questions.

PETITIONS

TILLSONBURG DISTRICT MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition here signed by a great number—well in excess of 2,000—of my constituents.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario”—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. Let's just wait until the members are settled. Those who are having

a conversation, could you have it outside, please. Let me proceed with petitions. Members are anxious, especially the member from Oxford, to get on with petitions.

Mr Hardeman: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital has asked for ministerial consent to make capital changes to its facility to accommodate the placement of a satellite dialysis unit; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has already given approval for the unit and committed operational dollars to it; and

“Whereas the community has already raised the funds for the equipment needed;

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

“That the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care give his final approval of the capital request change from the Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital immediately, so those who are in need of these life-sustaining dialysis services can receive them locally, thereby enjoying a better quality of life without further delay.”

I sign this petition, as I totally agree with it.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have a petition.

“To the Honourable the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, in Legislature assembled:

“The petition of the undersigned states:

“That Ontario Works was slashed by 21.6% in 1995, and with the increases to the cost of living, that cut its worth nearly 40% today;

“That Ontario disability support program benefits have been frozen since 1993; and because current social assistance rates do not allow recipients to meet their cost of living;

“That the people of Ontario deserve an adequate standard of living and are guaranteed such by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;

“That the jury at the inquest into the death of Kimberly Rogers recommended that social assistance rates be reviewed so that they reflect the actual costs of living;

“Therefore, your petitioners respectfully request that the Honourable House urge the Ontario government to immediately increase social assistance rates to reflect the true cost of living. This means shelter allowances that are based on the average local rents as calculated by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp, a basic needs allowance that is based on the nutritional food baskets prepared by local health units as well as the calculations for the costs of household operation, household furnishings and equipment, clothing, transportation and health care as reported in Statistics Canada’s Average Household Expenditures.”

TAXATION

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I’ve got a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas every day, 1.5 million Ontarians, including seniors, health care workers and students, purchase a basic meal that costs less than \$4; and

“Whereas a new 8% tax on such meals will disadvantage low-income Ontarians; and

“Whereas adding a tax for the first time on a glass of milk, a salad, a bowl of soup or a cup of coffee will affect a total of 1.5 million Ontarians each and every day in restaurants and cafeterias across the province;

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

“Do not”—repeat, do not—“impose a new 8% tax on basic meals under \$4.”

It’s another collection of these I’ve received from folks in the St Catharines area, with thousands of signatures. I’ve affixed my signature as well, and I’m sending the page Jen to the table with this petition.

1530

SEX OFFENDERS

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I’m pleased to present this petition to the Legislature of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas it is the right of every Canadian citizen to have the knowledge and the means to protect themselves and their children; and

“Whereas each act of a sexual offence against a child affects the quality of life for our nation’s children, their families and the general public; and

“Whereas incidences of child exploitation, child pornography, child prostitution and other sexual offences against children in Canada are on the rise; and

“Whereas those who commit sexual offences against children are at high risk to reoffend;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to press the federal government to pass new legislation that will: disallow parole of a sex offender who has refused treatment; require all released offenders to maintain treatment and be registered with their local police department within 24 hours of moving into a community and bi-yearly after that; ensure all schools, daycare centres, community centres and other places where children amass are notified when an offender is released into their community; place the names of all persons convicted of a sexual offence against a child on a national DNA data bank, available to all law enforcement agencies across the country; enforce stiffer sentences upon conviction, with a minimum of three years and a maximum of 10 years for a first offence, a mandatory 10 years and a maximum of 20 years for second offences and a minimum 25 years to a maximum life sentence thereafter.”

I support the petition and affix my signature.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of seniors from Fort Erie, including Janet Dwyer and Art Rankin. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas, during the election campaign, the Dalton McGuinty Liberals said they would improve the Ontario drug benefit program but now are considering delisting drugs and imposing higher user fees; and

“Whereas the Liberal government has increased costs to seniors by taking away the seniors’ property tax rebate, and increased the price of hydro;

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

“The Dalton McGuinty Liberals should keep their campaign promise to improve the Ontario drug benefit program and abandon their plan to delist drugs or increase seniors’ drug fees.”

In support, I affix my signature.

FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition from my constituents in Parry Sound-Muskoka and I shall read it.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas municipalities are solely responsible for funding fire services; and

“Whereas the previous government committed \$40 million to help small and rural communities in the purchase of new emergency firefighting equipment;

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

“That the province of Ontario proceed with a program to support municipal fire services for the purchase of life-saving equipment, and that the province develop a rural response strategy in consultation with municipal fire services.”

I support this petition and affix my signature.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): “To the Honourable the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, in Legislature assembled:

“The petition of the undersigned states:

“That Ontario Works was slashed by 21.6% in 1995, and with the increases to the cost of living, that cut is worth nearly 40% today;

“That Ontario disability support program benefits have been frozen since 1993; and because current social assistance rates do not allow recipients to meet their cost of living;

“That the people of Ontario deserve an adequate standard of living and are guaranteed such by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;

“That the jury at the inquest into the death of Kimberly Rogers recommended that social assistance rates be reviewed so that they reflect the actual costs of living;

“Therefore, your petitioners respectfully request that the Honourable House urge the Ontario government to immediately increase social assistance rates to reflect the true cost of living. This means shelter allowances that are based on the average local rents as calculated by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp, a basic needs allowance that is based on the nutritional food baskets prepared by local health units as well as the calculations for the costs of household operation, household furnishings and equipment, clothing, transportation and health care as reported in Statistics Canada’s Average Household Expenditures.”

I affix my signature to the top of it.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I have a petition signed by folks from York, Ontario, like the Ballantynes, and the Greenwoods of Wellandport, that reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas, during the election campaign, the Dalton McGuinty Liberals said they would improve the Ontario drug benefit program but now are considering delisting drugs and imposing higher user fees; and

“Whereas the Liberal government has increased costs to seniors by taking away the seniors’ property tax rebate and increased the price of hydro;

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

“The Dalton McGuinty Liberals should keep their campaign promise to improve the Ontario drug benefit program and abandon their plan to delist drugs or increase seniors’ drug fees.”

In support, I affix my signature.

HIGHWAY 407

Mr John O’Toole (Durham): I’m pleased to present a petition on behalf of one my constituents, Mr Bert Werry, as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the timely and efficient movement of people and products is critical to the success of the Ontario economy;

“Whereas the province of Ontario is meeting the challenge of traffic congestion in the greater Toronto area by improvements to our highway network and by improved public transportation;

“Whereas the construction of Highway 407 eastward into Durham region, across Clarington to highways 35 and 115 would improve the flow of traffic in Durham region and throughout the GTA;

“Whereas citizens and municipalities of Durham region have faced uncertainty over the final alignment of

the proposed 407 highway for many years and are entitled to a timely resolution of this matter;

“Whereas CAAC, the Clarington agricultural advisory committee, has expressed concerns and advocates for final construction completion of Highway 407 through Clarington, connecting to 35 and 115;

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

“That the Parliament of Ontario take steps to fast-track the extension of Highway 407 eastward into the regional municipality of Durham and that this commitment include the extension of Highway 407 through Clarington to connect with highways 35 and 115, while ensuring that all the necessary environmental assessments and public consultations are followed.”

I am pleased to sign this in support of my constituents in the riding of Durham.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Liberal government has said in their election platform that they were committed to improving the Ontario drug benefit program for seniors and now are considering delisting drugs and imposing user fees on seniors;

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

“To halt the consideration of imposing an income test, delisting drugs for coverage under the Ontario drug benefit plan or putting in place user fees for seniors and to maintain the present Ontario drug benefit plan for seniors to cover medications.”

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

“Whereas the Liberal government has said in their election platform that they were committed to improving the Ontario drug benefit program for seniors and now are considering delisting drugs and imposing user fees on seniors;

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

“To halt the consideration of imposing an income test, delisting drugs for coverage under the Ontario drug benefit plan or putting in place user fees for seniors and to maintain the present Ontario drug benefit plan for seniors to cover medications.”

I support the petition and affix my signature.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the parliamentary tradition in Ontario of presenting annual budgets in the House of the Legislative Assembly has existed for decades; and

“Whereas the previous government in 2003 showed disrespect for our public institutions and the people of Ontario by presenting a budget inside a private, for-profit auto parts factory; and

“Whereas the previous Speaker of the Legislative Assembly condemned the actions of his own party’s government;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to uphold parliamentary tradition and hold a public presentation and debate of the 2004 budget, and every budget thereafter, by our publicly elected members of Parliament inside the legislative chamber.”

I’ll affix my signature to this.

HIGHWAY 518

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition from my constituents in Parry Sound-Muskoka, and I shall read it. It says:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Highway 518 between Highway 69 and Highway 11 serves the residents of the communities of Haines Lake, Orrville, Bear Lake, Whitehall and Sprucedale; and

“Whereas Highway 518 is in a deplorable condition; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has previously assured local residents of its intention to upgrade and improve Highway 518;

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

“We request that the Ministry of Transportation immediately proceed with the reconstruction of Highway 518 between Highway 69 and Highway 11.”

I support this petition and sign it.

1540

SEAT BELTS

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I have several hundreds of petitions here addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

“Whereas most school buses and almost all tour buses operating within the province of Ontario are not equipped with seatbelts for the safety of the passengers; and

“Whereas this situation poses a real danger to all said passengers; and

“Whereas, as the result of an accident which occurred on July 29, 2003, on Highway 401 in the vicinity of the Pearson International Airport, just west of the municipality of metropolitan Toronto, one woman died of her injuries and 41 other passengers of a tour bus, all senior citizens, were seriously injured; and

“Whereas we value the lives of all passengers on said vehicles; and

“Whereas the fatality and some of the other injuries to the rest of the passengers might not have occurred if the said vehicle had been equipped with seat belts;

“We, the undersigned, petition the province of Ontario Legislative Assembly to enact legislation requiring it to be mandatory for all school buses, no matter what size, and all tour buses, no matter what size, operating in the province of Ontario to be equipped with safety seat belts.”

Speaker, I concur and I will affix my signature to it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LA PUBLICITÉ GOUVERNEMENTALE

Mr Phillips moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 25, An Act respecting government advertising /
Projet de loi 25, Loi concernant la publicité gouvernementale.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Mr Phillips, you have leadoff of an hour.

Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I should inform the House that I'll be sharing my time with the members for Prince Edward-Hastings, Mississauga West and Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge.

It's an honour to have this opportunity to begin the debate on the proposed Government Advertising Act. I had the pleasure of introducing this important piece of legislation in December 2003 as part of our pledge to the people of Ontario to deliver positive change. We believe this groundbreaking legislation is the first of its kind in the world. There is no other legislation like this anywhere else in the world that we've been able to find. So I'm pleased and I think all of the Legislature should recognize that we are really providing leadership in this area to ban partisan government advertising.

The Government Advertising Act is a central part of our government's democratic renewal initiative. The bill helps us, among other things, to fulfill a pledge we made to help restore public faith in our democratic institutions and to strengthen our democracy. This is one of our five major goals that we've laid out for the people of Ontario. Making government more accountable, transparent and fiscally responsible are key priorities of our government.

Partisan government advertising is the expensive use of taxpayers' dollars to purchase television, radio or print media to promote politicians and political parties instead of using those hard-earned dollars to inform the public. Under the previous government, it's clear that literally millions of dollars of hard-earned taxpayers' money was used for partisan purposes. If this bill is passed, this waste will stop. Taxpayers' money will be spent more responsibly.

Obviously, the money saved, every single dollar, will be spent on things that matter to Ontarians: the quality of our health care system, our classrooms, our environment and our communities. It won't be spent glorifying politicians and party platforms, nor will it be spent criticizing those who do not share the government's point of view. The days of finding a glossy, partisan booklet in your mailbox will be gone for good.

I would say to the public that there was \$10 million of taxpayers' money spent every single year for the last several years on those glossy brochures that we received in our homes. That's the day—the day when this will be gone for good—that I'm personally looking forward to. It's been a long time coming.

Allow me now to provide some of the details of this groundbreaking legislation for the Legislature. First, the Government Advertising Act would, if passed, require the office of the Provincial Auditor to pre-screen all government advertising. What it means is that any government advertising that's proposed by an Ontario government ministry for television, radio, print, billboards or mass mailings first must be brought forward to the Provincial Auditor for review. This would include print materials that a ministry proposes to pay to have delivered to Ontario households through bulk mail. The Provincial Auditor or the Advertising Commissioner—and the legislation provides the authority for the Provincial Auditor, if he or she so chooses, to appoint an Advertising Commissioner to perform this role for the Provincial Auditor. The Advertising Commissioner appointed by the auditor would have a specific amount of time in which to review the advertising and determine whether it's appropriate or not. The auditor will review the ad to ensure that it meets the standards set out in the act. I'd like to just briefly review those standards for the Legislature.

The first requirement is that the ad must not be partisan. The auditor would review it against that criteria. The ad must not, as a primary objective, foster a positive impression of the governing party or a negative impression of a person or entity who is critical of the government. In other words, the primary objective of this advertising can't be to promote the party in power or to attack any organization that may have a view contrary to the government.

Another requirement of the advertising is that there should be a reasonable means to achieve one or more of four purposes, and we lay out in the bill four purposes that the advertising must meet. One is to inform the public about government policies, programs or services. The second one is to inform the public of their rights and responsibilities under the law. The third is to encourage or discourage specific social behaviour in the public interest. The fourth is to promote Ontario, or any part of Ontario, as a good place to live, work, invest, study or visit. Those are the four criteria against which it's evaluated.

Let me give you an example of how it would work. Imagine that a ministry—probably the Ministry of

Health—develops a television ad to prevent teenage smoking. Before this ad could be aired, it goes to the Provincial Auditor for review. The auditor would review the ad in its entirety, using the standards I spoke of a moment ago. An ad to try and prevent teenage smoking would meet the third objective that I talked about: to encourage or discourage specific social behaviour in the public interest. So it would meet the standards spelled out in the ad. And as long as it was not partisan, as long as it did not include the name, voice or image of a member of the executive council, as long as it didn't have as a primary objective to foster a positive impression of the governing party and as long as it included a statement that the item is paid for by the government of Ontario, it would be permissible. So the Provincial Auditor would authorize that ad. It's as simple as that.

One area I would like to spend a few moments talking about is that there is one area where it is possible—in all other cases you cannot use the name, voice or image of a member of the executive council or a member of the assembly—to have an exception, and that is where the primary target is located outside Ontario. We have put this in the act because the experience we have looked at suggests that one of the most effective ways of attracting trade to a jurisdiction is by using the head of the government to communicate that. So the bill does permit the Premier or a minister to appear in advertising as long as the primary audience is outside Ontario.

But I would stress that even those ads must meet all of the other criteria. Those ads, even though they would be appearing in the US, for example, still have to go to the Provincial Auditor. The auditor would still review them to determine whether they're partisan or not, to determine whether the primary objective is to foster a positive impression of the governing party or a negative impression of a person or entity. It must include a statement that it is paid for by the government of Ontario, and it must meet one of those four standards.

I think the one area where we've had some comment on the bill is this particular one, where the bill does permit a member of the Legislature, the Premier, to be used in advertising. But the only place it can be used is where the primary audience is outside Ontario, and still the Provincial Auditor must review the entire ad and it must meet all the other criteria.

1550

As I said, the reason we did this was that the advice we've gotten is that in many cases the best spokesperson for a jurisdiction, in business and investment, is the head of government. So we felt it would be a mistake to take away that opportunity for Ontario to use what may be one of its most effective tools in the years ahead. I think it's important, as the public hears this debate, that even those ads still go through all the other scrutiny we've built in.

I'm very pleased to have been able to introduce this bill and very pleased as we begin second debate on it. As I said when I began my discussion, we're not aware of any other jurisdiction in the world that has legislation like

this. We think it will do a lot to help restore public confidence in governments. Certainly the public have told us loud and clear that they do not want their tax dollars being used to promote the partisan interests of any political party. So I'm honoured to be able to introduce this piece of legislation. I look forward to the debate here in the Legislature. I also look forward to an opportunity to discuss this bill at committee in the weeks ahead.

Finally, I want to say that another part of the bill that we should be aware of is that the Provincial Auditor will be required to file a report annually. Part of that report will be to spell out how much taxpayer money was spent on advertising, so the public will have a clear report from the Provincial Auditor outlining in detail how much money was spent on advertising. To strengthen awareness of and compliance with the bill, we'll also prepare a code of conduct in advertising that would apply to all ministries, including ministers and their staff. The annual report of the auditor would allow Ontarians to know exactly how much of their tax dollars has been spent on advertising. Each and every dollar spent on partisan advertising, which we will prohibit if this bill were to pass, is a dollar less that we could spend on health care, education, our communities and the environment.

With this bill, our government is now taking firm action in delivering a new and better direction. This is an important step forward, and I look forward to the debate. I look forward to the bill being discussed at committee and I look forward to the bill being passed and not only saving the taxpayers money but, I think, helping to restore the confidence the public have in their democratic institutions.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I'm pleased to enter into the debate, although "debate" implies that there will be disagreement back and forth, and I can't imagine there being any disagreement with this bill.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Stick around.

Mr Parsons: No, I won't rise to that.

I praise Minister Phillips for this. This is a bill that's long overdue. The people of Ontario told us over and over in the past four years—in fact, the past eight years—that they wanted to see a change.

One of the great things about an election campaign is knocking on doors and meeting people. There are many, many homes where it is quite evident that people work very hard, extremely hard, for their money, and it was offensive to them to see it blatantly wasted on campaign ads that went in the form of public service ads. It bothered them greatly. I would suggest to the former government that the money they spent probably backfired tremendously, because people are offended when they work hard for their dollars and then they're taken and just thrown away on ads.

Interestingly, in the year leading up to the election there seemed to be almost a frenzy of brochures arriving in homes: brochures telling us how great our schools are, except the parents knew that the schools were struggling; and brochures telling us how great health care was, but

people involved with the health care system knew that they were struggling. The ads were really an insult to the intelligence of the people.

There is a purpose for government advertising. It's very clearly laid out in here. But I do find it strange—and I guess ironic would be the right word—that the previous government, no matter what they'd done, maybe teachers didn't like them, maybe nurses didn't like them, maybe no end of groups didn't like them, said, "At least we're good money managers." They couldn't have been more wrong in their statements. We're now seeing from the auditor, we're seeing from these ads, that they were spending money like crazy on things that did not improve the lot of people in Ontario.

So this bill will ensure—not that there ever was a risk that this current government would do partisan advertising—that future governments can't use public money for what's really private, political business.

We look at the bill, and I think there's some scepticism among the public that a government would actually do this, because some people said to me that this bill is bad politics. I've said it may be, because maybe there are times when a political party would want to do partisan ads. It may be bad politics, but it's good policy. It is the right thing for Ontario. It is the right thing to do.

And I would note that this is one of a continuing string, that virtually every day in this House we're seeing another Liberal promise kept. In spite of the empty cupboards that we found when we took office, we're keeping our promises. This one certainly is a high priority for the people when their money's involved.

One side effect, in my mind, of all the ads was that they made people cynical about politics and politicians. If we look at the number of people who voted in the election last fall, it's in decline again, because the public has a sense—and they had the last eight years to get that sense developed—that politicians waste their money and only do what's good for politicians and forget where they came from. The advertising was a wonderful example for them to quote how the politicians weren't responding to what the people of Ontario wanted.

The risk when people feel that way is they don't show up and vote. In much of the world, there are people prepared to die to get the democracy that we enjoy in this province and in this country. We have a system that most of the world envies, and yet, we've seen cheap-trick political ads turn people off democracy and stay home and not vote. Democracy only works when each and every individual participates in it, and very clearly, this not only didn't work for the Progressive Conservative Party, but it hurt the people of Ontario from the aspect of believing in democracy, believing in their politicians.

The people in this Legislature, each and every one of us, came here wanting to do the right thing, and yet, some bright advisers persuaded some people over the last eight years to take the public money and waste it on this. So now we're back on track, and I'm very proud of our government for doing that.

We made both an election promise and a throne speech commitment that this would happen, and it's hap-

pening. We knew that every dollar that went to a partisan ad was a dollar less for the health care system, a dollar less for water inspectors. How many water inspectors were laid off to pay for the partisan ads over the last eight years? It's a number that should terrify people. Partisan ads were put ahead of safe water in this province. Schools struggled over the last eight years financially. There was no money for textbooks, but the previous government always found money to send glitzy brochures to every house in Ontario saying how much better they were doing, while at the same time classes were getting larger.

There were some statements today from the opposition challenging the Premier over his announcement of capping class sizes. One doesn't have to be a rocket scientist to know if you've got 35 students in junior kindergarten versus 20 students, obviously each and every student in that 20-student classroom is going to get far more attention. He's going to have a chance to ask questions. It's going to give the teacher a chance to get to know that person and work with them. The money that should have been in the classrooms over the last eight years went to advertising agencies and was just wasted.

1600

I applaud the system, because I've had people say to me, "Well, you're going to ban the ads, but who's going to determine whether the ads are partisan or not?" There's a wonderful role in this province, which is that of the Provincial Auditor. He's an independent individual: doesn't work for the government, doesn't work for the opposition parties, stands free and independent. The Provincial Auditor will be empowered to review and determine whether an ad is partisan or not. I think that's a wonderful mechanism to ensure neutrality.

The mechanism is relatively simple. It's going to add a little more time to placing an ad. Sometimes I like the expression which says, "Make haste slowly." The ads themselves will require a little more thought to ensure that there's no partisanship in them, and they will go to the Provincial Auditor to be reviewed—each and every ad, whether it's TV, radio, print or billboards, or whether it's householders that the provincial government mails out.

A government needs to advertise. I'm sure all of us, as elected members, from time to time—in fact, on a regular basis—have calls from people saying, "I've lost my OHIP card. How do I replace my OHIP card?" That's a perfect opportunity to use advertising on the part of the government. New initiatives, or if there are amendments to the Highway Traffic Act, there's an opportunity to advertise. So it won't prevent that, but it gives the Provincial Auditor the time to review and determine whether it meets the criteria we've established.

Now, just a quick overview of the standards that we're going to require to be met. It informs the public of current or proposed government policies. That's what I just said. It informs the public of their rights and responsibilities. For the public at times, the provincial government is a huge monster and they need information on how to contact us, how to avail themselves of our services.

It “encourages or discourages specific social behaviours.” We’ve seen ads about drinking; we’ve seen ads about drugs. I kind of wish there was a Conservative member here to hear this, but nevertheless—they’ll probably be in their offices watching this, I’m sure.

“How much money?” That’s the question I’ve got on a regular basis. “How much money did the previous government spend on partisan advertising?” The answer is that we’re not totally sure, but we believe over \$250 million went into it. There were tricks that were used, which certainly the Provincial Auditor will close the door on.

The Provincial Auditor is getting a great deal of increased power with this, but this is consistent with some other actions that we’ve taken. The Provincial Auditor will be able to review the ads and determine whether they can go forward or not. We used to, certainly under the previous couple of governments, play a game of “What are the finances of Ontario like?” or “What are the finances of the school boards and the hospitals like?”

We would get a report at the end of the year from the Provincial Auditor. I am thrilled that Premier McGuinty and our government have put in place legislation that gives the Provincial Auditor more powers, not just with this advertising, but more powers to hold the government accountable for the dollars. In every area, whether it be hospitals, whether it be school boards, whether it be anything, there’s only one taxpayer. The Provincial Auditor will be given much more of a free hand to ensure that the dollars are spent right. I believe that’s the right thing to do.

I guess the intriguing question is why didn’t it happen before? For a government that always, over the last eight years, boasted of how well they managed the money, why didn’t they want the Provincial Auditor to go and look at the books? We found out last fall why they didn’t. I shudder to think, if they had been re-elected with the deficit that they had created, what the slash and burn would be to our health care system, to our education system.

It also reinforces for me that if you give the public the right information, they make the right decision. People in Ontario are not stupid. It is nice to see them back on track. They realized that the savings were very false for them, as presented by the previous government.

Have we created loopholes? That’s another question again. You’re going to find a way to get the Premier’s photo or the minister’s photo. I can assure you, there are no loopholes, and there are no ways for it to be changed after this bill is passed.

The bill is very specific. The Premier’s photograph will still appear on ads that are placed throughout the United States and, in fact, the rest of the world, because we want to make it very clear that Ontario’s open for business and open for tourism. It is a wise decision on our government’s part to have a tremendous spokesperson, as we have with the Premier, to talk to groups, but it’s important to note that, if the ads are aimed at the US, there are no voters in the United States. There are no voters in Europe, there are no voters in the Far East or

whatsoever. The only advertising material where we will permit the Premier’s photograph is to non-voters. What could be more fair than that?

In closing, again I applaud the Premier and Minister Phillips for doing what should have been done years ago. Once again, we’ve kept a promise. Once again we’re doing what is right for the people of Ontario, and I’m very proud of this.

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): To truly speak out on Bill 25, which prohibits partisan government advertising, one would need to contravene the Speaker’s consistent rulings on the use of props. To truly grasp the urgent need for Bill 25, I’d need to make a fan of the expensive, colourful brochures sent to Ontario households on a regular basis by the provincial government. To illustrate the point more clearly, a backdrop behind me should probably be papered with reproductions of the print ads, magazine ads, posters, flyers, householders and other print pieces remarkably similar in colour scheme and graphic look to the political party colours of the former government.

The use of the props would not end with wallpaper or paper props. Your ears would be filled with commercial spots repeating and repeating the taxpayer-financed harangue that walked parallel to the previous government’s party platform. Before me, on a row of televisions, a succession of clone-like commercial spots, each almost as mind-numbing as they are expensive, would repeat and repeat in an endless loop.

I have painted a verbal picture of the egregious and unforgivable overuse, misuse and abuse of the power of paid media repetition in this manner to convey, in a small way, why the government of Ontario has taken the extraordinary step of finding the necessity to pass a bill prohibiting the Ontario provincial government from using the financial resources of hard-working Ontario families to repeat and repeat a message having absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with the delivery of government services.

There is a difference between an honest and legitimate need to convey and repeat a specific message through the medium of advertising and the blatant and flagrant repeated misuse of the powers of content control and repetition.

Governments need to advertise to get a message on the use and availability of government services to an audience or to a segment of our population. We, as citizens and as consumers, need to know how to gain access to government services, what deadlines and conditions apply and how to use specific government services and programs.

Responsible government advertising has an honest business case. It’s part of a communications strategy. It is used on a reasonable basis, and it is independent of the policies and the philosophies of the party in power. As well, responsible government advertising should not promote or aggrandize any member of the government’s executive council, especially the Premier. But that is not how government advertising has evolved in the last three governments.

The verbal props I referred to at the beginning of my remarks would be full of such titles as “Report to Taxpayers” and similar titles that implied the taxpayers actually wanted that type of advertising piece promoted and released with their money.

1610

The last estimate of partisan government advertising I saw was about a quarter of a billion dollars of taxpayer funds squandered in the name of partisan political promotion with absolutely no value whatsoever to the hard-working taxpayers of Ontario. I call that a real sponsorship scandal.

The part that should outrage Ontarians even more is that the hundreds of millions of dollars spent on advertising that had no impartial informational value and which produced no benefit to Ontario taxpayers whatsoever—each and every dollar wasted on self-promotional partisan advertising was a dollar that could have been spent on repairing schools. It was a dollar that could have been spent on hiring nurses. It was a dollar that should have been spent on balancing the provincial budget instead. As it is, Ontario was left some \$20 billion deeper in debt as of the fall of 2003 than it was in the spring of 1995.

Parliamentary tradition places the government and opposition benches just more than two sword lengths apart in this legislative chamber. It has never been necessary to erect a physical barrier to keep the sides apart. It is thus as unfortunate as it is necessary to erect a legislative barrier to ensure that good judgment and the wise use of taxpayer funds is the law rather than the accepted practice in Ontario. It is the law precisely because advertising in today’s world is as pervasive as it is effective.

No advertiser in any medium is forced to advertise, but they do, and they will continue to advertise. Advertisers know what speakers take a career to learn. Advertisers know that people have an attention span of about 30 seconds on any topic. Through focus groups, research teams, storyboarding and the efforts of creative minds that border on the brilliant, the initiative in conveying any message passes to the advertiser once the message’s creative content is combined with the awesome power to repeat and repeat the message. Depending on what age you are, you can recall and repeat verbatim a commercial message that may not have been broadcast or printed for 20 or 30 or 40 years, and that’s without any reinforcement. That’s power. That’s the real thing.

If an advertiser has the financial staying power to be able to repeat the message, and the creative minds to boil the message down to a simplistic slogan and a compelling visual, then there is not a power in creation to prevent that message from being absorbed. The previous government certainly had the financial staying power to be able to afford to tell Ontarians that everything Ontarians stood against—a crumbling school system; impossible waits in our health care system—was really good for them. That financing staying power came from taking funds from hospitals, schools and public transit in

Ontario. Fortunately, Ontarians rejected these Orwellian messages and chose change last fall. Now Ontarians can look to their provincial government not merely to protect their tax funds but to protect them from an assault on their minds in print ads and in broadcast media.

Bill 25 says clearly that advertising must be “a reasonable means ... to inform the public,” to affect specific social behaviours and “to promote Ontario ... as a good place to live, work, invest, study or” vacation. The referee in this case is not any cabinet minister or ministry administrator but a designated staff member within the Office of the Provincial Auditor.

These standards of objectivity begin with a simple statement that the advertising is paid for by the government of Ontario. Advertising, commercials, advertorials or paid programming can no longer walk a policy path parallel to the governing political party in Ontario. In other words, it must be informational and not partisan. To that end, government advertising may no longer promote or showcase a member of the Ontario executive council or any member of this assembly. Government advertising may no longer be part of an image management strategy, fostering a positive or a negative impression of a person or an entity. These standards, and the practices that facilitate them, will evolve over time. I expect Ontario will be studied intensively for its leadership in stating clearly what publicly funded advertising may and may not buy.

Making the Office of the Provincial Auditor responsible for interpreting the provisions of Bill 25 puts the judgment in the hands of an independent officer of the Legislature. It is this type of groundbreaking initiative that will restore the faith of Ontarians in their democratic institutions. In this way, our Ontario government will be more accountable, more transparent and more fiscally responsible. In this way, Ontarians will see value for the expenditure of their taxes rather than more years of crass manipulation.

Goodbye self-congratulatory householders. Farewell to ads that insult teachers and other groups opposed to the government’s policies. We say to the men and women who plan the media buys and develop the creative content to focus on informing Ontarians rather than manipulating them. Ontario challenges other jurisdictions to take our lead and walk away from partisan advertising, as they have walked away from smoking.

In the provincial election of 2003, and in the years leading up to it, our party said to Ontarians that we will cease the production of partisan political advertising voluntarily, and we have done that from our very first day in office. We also said that the government of Ontario will ban the practice of partisan political advertising in the province of Ontario—promise made, promise kept.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The member for Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh.

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): Not my riding, Mr Speaker, but you may want to try Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge.

The Deputy Speaker: I've got you in the wrong chair, that's for sure. Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge—at least they're three words.

Mr Arthurs: That's right. Both of them are multiple jurisdictions, and that's always a challenge.

The Deputy Speaker: I apologize, but continue.

Mr Arthurs: It's not a problem.

It's with pleasure that I rise this afternoon to follow both the member from Prince Edward-Hastings and the member from Mississauga West, and most particularly, though, the Chair of Management Board, who has a long history in this Legislature and certainly knows the comings and goings. Who more appropriate to be bringing forward Bill 25?

Bill 25, An Act respecting government advertising. It's interesting when one looks at the words, "respecting government advertising." In the simplest of fashions, one might think of that as having regard for respecting, about government advertising. But in effect it's much more than that; it really does talk about respect: respect for the taxpayers' dollars, respect for government advertising, respect for the purposes for which advertising is meant.

The legislation is an important cornerstone of our government's pledge to deliver positive change and make government in the province of Ontario work for the people of Ontario. It's groundbreaking legislation. Research was done in an effort to find comparators, to find materials that would assist in developing a piece of legislation to ease that burden. They weren't there. There are some jurisdictions that may have some policy initiatives, but none that could be found that have legislation in place. This will provide opportunities for other jurisdictions to look carefully at what our government is doing and, should this bill come into law, opportunities to follow suit so that they too can show respect for their taxpayers in the advertising they do.

It's one of those signature pieces of legislation, if one thinks of it in that way. It was core to our campaign strategy last summer and last fall. It will ban partisan advertising, if passed. It will take out of play the opportunity to advantage oneself as a government, as a political party in power, as an individual elected member by virtue of the taxpayers' dollars. As a matter of fact, it's central to the democratic renewal initiative that our government is undertaking. That renewal initiative, led under the responsibility of the Attorney General, the member from St Paul's, but aptly directed by the parliamentary assistant, the member for Sarnia-Lambton—we know that this piece of legislation will fold in, in an effective way, with the overall agenda for democratic renewal.

1620

We made a pledge last year to work to restore public faith in our democratic institutions. This will be one small part of that agenda—not all of it by any means, but one very visible part. In effect, maybe it will be what people don't see after this bill is in place or when the bill comes into play, as opposed to what they do see. It will remove the self-promotion and the self-aggrandizing of governing parties or individuals undertaken in the guise of government work.

We're doing this by introducing initiatives to strengthen our democracy and make government more accountable to the public, more transparent in what we're doing and more fiscally responsible. We're taking these steps—and they're considered in some cases to be bold steps, positive steps—to strengthen democracy and improve the government in a way that it serves the people of Ontario.

This particular piece of legislation, the Government Advertising Act, Bill 25, introduced by the Chair of Management Board, Gerry Phillips, is a positive example of the steps we're taking as a government to make government work for the people of Ontario.

Partisan advertising will become a thing of the past. No longer can members of the executive council or members of the assembly find their voices and images used for partisan purposes at the taxpayers' expense.

During the election last fall we made a promise to eliminate the waste of taxpayers' money in the tens of millions of dollars. We know that the overall context of government advertising is necessary, and it runs into many hundreds of millions of dollars. Some of that is necessary, but there were certainly many millions of dollars spent, even as recently as last fall, that were wasted.

I'd like to draw attention, if I could, just briefly to what our commitment was during the course of last summer and fall. We made a very specific commitment to implement a bill to ban self-promotional government advertising and authorize the Provincial Auditor to review and approve all government advertising in advance. This legislation clearly meets that goal.

It's interesting to note that as early as last April, Anthony Westell from the Globe and Mail was commenting on money wasted by the prior government in advertising initiatives. Let me quote:

"First, Ernie Eves's government shouldn't be using millions of dollars of taxpayers' money to distribute what amounts to Tory party propaganda. And second, this pamphlet"—speaking about some of the documentation in the form of government advertising out last spring—"is another phase in the campaign to sell the budget to the voters before submitting it to the Ontario Legislature"—we know havoc created here in this Legislature and across the province by the failure to deal with the budget where it should have been dealt with—"that is, another attempt to subvert parliamentary democracy."

We know what the history is. We have a particular obligation to ensure that it doesn't get repeated. This bill is about ensuring it doesn't get repeated.

We repeated that commitment, not only in the context of what was written as part of the party platform but also as part of the government's throne speech. We put it out there on the very first day as one of the cornerstone activities we'd be undertaking. The Chair of Management Board brought the bill forward in December last year, in the first sitting session of the Legislature. Early on, only into April, only in the second part of the sitting of the first major session, the bill is before us for second reading now, and ideally, subsequent to consideration by

the Legislature, if it acquires second reading approval, it will move off to committee.

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): A commitment made, a commitment kept.

Mr Arthurs: That's right: a commitment made and a commitment being kept.

The people of Ontario expect their hard-earned tax dollars to be used in a fashion that will serve them—not serve us, but serve them—instead of serving partisan political interests. They want their money used to provide for clean air and clean water in their communities. They want their tax dollars to be used diligently for the benefit of all citizens in the province of Ontario. After all—it has been said here before—every dollar spent on self-serving, partisan advertisements is a dollar less for our classrooms or health care or water inspections.

I only have to draw attention to some of the materials, some of the documentation, the financial analysis, to see how many dollars and examples of dollars that have been wasted that could have gone to classrooms and health care and water inspections.

I just draw attention to the preliminary fiscal 2003-04 media spending. These need final balancing numbers, but they are projected annual numbers. Interestingly enough, from April to October of last year, from early in the spring when one was anticipating an election until we took government, the finance ministry, in and of itself, was second-highest in media spending—some \$5.3 million. From October 24 to March 31, although we probably need some confirmation, there were virtually no dollars spent on media spending. Five million dollars leading up to last fall's provincial election—one would have to suggest, in an effort to provide some rationale for the actions that took place last March with the Magna budget.

As a matter of fact, just to get a comparator: Elections Ontario, in the same period—Elections Ontario holds the elections for everyone in the province of Ontario—in its entirety spent just \$5 million. One ministry, the finance ministry, spent more than Elections Ontario in its entirety. And we know what the purpose of that spending was by the finance ministry during that period of time. It was because they were in so deep following the Magna budget that they felt they had no choice.

Interestingly, that promotional material that was out there, millions and millions of dollars of taxpayers' money, was all to no avail.

Mr Leal: Just to enhance Janet Ecker's image.

Mr Arthurs: And it didn't work.

Mr Leal: Not one iota.

Mr Arthurs: Partisan advertising has obviously been used far too long by far too many politicians, far too many parties and far too many party platforms. Probably no party in this Legislature is not guilty of that in past governments, in governments prior to that. But we're planning, and we will, subsequent to this bill being adopted with the will of this House, put a stop to that.

There are all too many examples of the partisan advertising that has filled our airwaves and arrived on our

doorsteps over the past few years. I just want to take a look again at last year, because I think we need to keep things in the context of what's current with us.

You'll probably remember these—and I have to tell you that when my constituents received these on their doorstep, they believed them to be election material. Surprise. They thought, "This is the province of Ontario, the government, the Tory party," and that was their election material. This one talked about the budget overview; there was one, the education report, that came out in the spring of 2003; and the report to taxpayers on seniors was in the summer of 2003. And each and every one of those, as they arrived in the millions at people's doorstep—and the energy report—

Mr Leal: How much does it cost to post one of those things?

Mr Arthurs: Well, the claim was some 24 cents for production and delivery for each one to the millions of households across the province, and they were coming weekly; not just one, but weekly.

Each one had a flavour and a theme when you opened it. Right there on the inside of the front cover was the member opposite, then-Premier Ernie Eves, with a message on each and every one that went out, all in the spring and summer of last year, knowing that the election was imminent. As a matter of fact, most of us thought, I'm sure even the member across thought, that he'd probably call an election within a matter of hours. On the last page before the tear-off, each one of those had the minister of the day in that particular ministry.

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Mr Leal: Was John Baird's picture on one of those too?

Mr Arthurs: Well, I think we had one of the member from Nepean-Carleton under energy; one of the former member from, I think it was Waterloo South—I have to check and see—the Minister of Education; and the former member from my riding, showing on the back, the finance minister. You probably had that at your door—multiple copies. They just kept coming; they never stopped. It was not only the cost of getting them there but after you went over them in detail, because they were such important information, I'm sure—we spent nights with them under our pillows so when we woke up in the middle of the night, we could fall back to sleep again rapidly, because we sure wouldn't want to stay awake. They went to the blue box and we paid the cost of having them recycled.

We know that government advertising has cost the taxpayers multiple millions of dollars over the years. The waste has to stop. It has to come to a grinding halt. Legitimate government advertising for real purposes is necessary but not when it's blatantly partisan in its nature.

If the legislation passes, it will require the office of the Provincial Auditor to pre-screen any proposed government advertising. It will have to go there first. There will be a process in place to determine whether or not it meets the very high standards that we're going to be setting out

in this legislation. If, in effect, it meets all of those standards, then it can go forward. If it doesn't meet those standards, the advertising doesn't happen. The ministry can resubmit it if they so choose, and make changes, but it can't go forward without the pre-screening and the approval of the Provincial Auditor.

It will include clear standards that the auditor or an Advertising Commissioner—and there is a provision where the auditor will be able to establish an office of the Advertising Commissioner. The Advertising Commissioner will have to be appointed by the Board of Internal Economy, so it's getting vetted and provided for in a multi-party process; therefore, there can't be any indication of partisanship on the part of the party in power by virtue of parking someone there who might take their interests. It's far broader than that.

The ad in itself must be a reasonable means to do one of a number of things potentially.

Inform the public about government policies, programs and services: This is for any advertising. This is not whether or not it would have had a picture of the Premier or a cabinet minister; this is simply for an ad to meet the strict criteria: Is it money well spent in Ontario to provide people with information?

Advise the public about the rights and responsibilities they have: That's another one of the potential criteria.

Encourage or discourage certain types of social behaviour: That's a responsibility we have as a collective body, not only as government but as a community, as a society, to reinforce positive social behaviours or to discourage those things that are negative in our community. We have many examples as we move through legislation and move through the terms of office—the minister referenced smoking as an example of the types of things we want to discourage in young people. That's one of the criteria one would have to consider.

Promote Ontario: We always want to promote Ontario as a good place to live, work, invest, visit or study.

There are clear standards set out for which advertising can go forward. But in addition, the advertising cannot be intended to foster a positive impression of the governing party. We can't use it to our own political advantage, even as an ad without the image or the voice on a billboard—and we saw lots of those—or in a magazine. There are examples of those. This can't foster a positive impression of a governing party—it talks about government for the people of Ontario—or a negative impression of any person or group that might be critical of the government. We can't use taxpayers' money to run down a group that might not like the position being taken by the government at that point in time.

Mr Leal: The way they ran down teachers and nurses.

Mr Arthurs: In much the same way; it protects the interests of the public.

So an advertisement considered partisan by the auditor doesn't go forward. It stops right there, dead in its tracks—no appeal. Resubmit if it has enough value to resubmit, or simply set it aside and move on.

There are certainly examples of the types of things that one could consider for advertising under this legis-

lation—both good and maybe not so good examples. The Chair of Management Board made reference to an advertisement for smoking that would fit nicely under that category, where we're trying to discourage young people from smoking. So the ad would be prepared by the appropriate ministry, probably the Ministry of Health, and submitted to the auditor for consideration. They would review it within a reasonable time frame, and that would be set through regulation—work being done with the auditor to determine what would be a reasonable time frame and what kind of resources will be needed; for example, an advertising commissioner—but in a reasonable time for the ministry to be advised whether it meets the standards so that the advertising could then go forward or come to a complete stop.

Now what might not be considered as reasonable advertising, I would suggest—I don't know if I have it all here. It's probably not handy. You may recall last spring, I believe it was May—I'm sure it was May of last year—that the government of the day, the party of the day, chose to use Maclean's magazine. I must say that when I received my May 19 copy of Maclean's magazine and opened it up, I couldn't believe what I was seeing. Not only did we have to contend with this in our mailbox, on our doorstep, in multiple fashion, but we had to contend with some 39—

The Deputy Speaker: I'd just remind the member that government documents can be shown but not flaunted.

Mr Arthurs: Those are government documents. I'm just referencing them so I can get the title. The Maclean's magazine of May 19 had a 39-page—half the magazine—colour insert, a great centrefold. As a matter of fact, the way it was packaged, you could take it out. You could pluck it out of there by moving a couple staples around and have a 39-page insert. There were glossy photos and lovely pictures of the Premier and others included, all with tax dollars, all leading right into an election time frame. As a matter of fact, I think at that time people were talking about a June election; the writ could have been dropped any day. It was just everywhere. So we want to get rid of that type of blatant partisanship and use of resources, tax dollars, of the people of Ontario.

We talked about advertising that could be allowed, advertising that meets the requirements of the people of Ontario to inform them about their rights and to discourage or encourage certain behaviours. There are always some exceptions. There have to be exceptions to protect the people's interest. The exceptions are not exceptions in the context of using the images and voices of assembly members or the executive council, but there are exceptions in the event of an urgent health matter which requires an advertising campaign. I think SARS would have been a good example of that. No one would criticize the Premier of the day for taking proactive action in respect to SARS at that point in time. Those are the types of urgent health matters one might consider. To ensure that during an emergency situation people receive

the best information, and last August's blackout would be a clear example of an emergency situation where one would respect the fact of seeing the Premier on TV or getting information out to provide stability in the system and make people feel comfortable with what's happening and that the government was in control: Those are the types of urgent matters and emergency situations that one could understand and see as exemptions to the strict criteria, the high standards that we plan to put in place, should the Legislature adopt Bill 25.

As well, we're going to let the public be the judge of whether or not in an emergency situation or a health situation we did the right thing. On an annual basis, the auditor will be asked to report to this Legislature on the cost of government advertising: How much is being spent by government in the context of the ministries for the purpose of advertising? So we'll have that as an annual report.

There will also be provisions should the auditor feel that a government of the day has misused the legislation or hasn't followed the guidelines. He can make a special report at his call. He can also seek out information from the ministries to ensure that each government is complying with the legislation that is in place. There is a lot of power provided to the auditor so that we have available to that arm's-length individual responsible to this Legislature and the people of Ontario? the necessary powers to allow for the legislation to work in the best possible way.

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To wrap up, I want to come back almost to where we started. It's our objective to bring transparency and accountability to government in its advertising. It's our objective to acknowledge that constraints from partisanship on advertising is a central tenet of our democratic renewal process. It's a cornerstone of a pledge we made last year. It is a commitment we made. Some across may want to refer to it as a promise kept, and I'm anticipating that they will want to stand and so acknowledge before the debate is over on second reading.

We are committed to a new course of action, one that is open and accountable to the people of Ontario. This particular act, the Government Advertising Act, would be an important step in this direction. I'm urging all members of the Legislature to support this very important piece of legislation.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I am certainly pleased to offer my comments with respect to Bill 25. My first question on this would be, how come there's no definition of what advertising is? Certainly there's reference to, and I think the member has been using this, "partisan political advertising." The legislation does provide under subsection 6(3) what partisan is. It says, "An item is partisan if, in the opinion of the Provincial Auditor, a primary objective of the item is to promote the partisan political interests of the governing party."

Certainly that specifies what partisan is, but we don't know what would be classified as advertising. I think it's

important, because it's not just something that is paid for. What is being advertised? I think that's something this act really does miss out on.

The framework of the legislation is set out here, but when you get to the nuts and bolts of this act, it's going to be found in the regulations. I would hope that the regulations would be subject to public hearings and subject to review by the members of this Legislature. I would think an amendment should be sought to ensure that such regulations are tabled in the Legislature prior to coming into force so that they can be subject to a full discussion.

The role of the Advertising Commissioner is not well defined in terms of the process of appointment and the terms of reference of the position. Also, the Provincial Auditor has no real enforcement powers under the act beyond a reference in the auditor's annual report, which is obviously not of the same sting that one would expect of this, but it does also contain no appeal of an auditor's decision. So it seems to be a little bit conflicting in terms of what we are trying to accomplish here.

Mr Kormos: This is but two minutes of so-called question and comments. I don't think I am going to get on this afternoon. It looks like the Conservatives, if they use up their hour for their leadoff, are going to take us right into 5:50 and then 10 minutes of questions and comments. But I will be speaking to the bill other than the two minutes now this afternoon, so if folks want to move ahead to Oprah or whatever else is on the networks, feel free. I will be back another time, another place. Then again, no short shrift to the Conservatives who want to debate this bill and are eager to have you as an audience as well, I'd invest in Oprah if I were you.

I should indicate that I am grateful. I thanked the minister, because his staff gave me a briefing on Thursday morning. I was apologetic because I was late for that. I ran into a group of kids from Jordan, elementary school students and their folks and teachers. It's Hudak's riding, but they stopped so I said hello to them while they were on the steps and I was late.

But, honest, I go there and the staff are incredible; they really were super. I'm grateful to them. They were very effective, but there were seven of them. When I realized I was the only person attending the briefing, I was embarrassed. There was at least half a million dollars in salaries sitting in that room so patiently with me as I asked some of the most mundane and pedestrian questions about the legislation. They took me by the hand and walked me through this bill section by section, punctuation mark by punctuation mark.

In the course of doing that, I learned, and I'm grateful to these people for doing it, that the bill is not what it appears to be. I predict—and I say to you that you should have had the benefit of that careful briefing that I had with those high-priced staff people, for whom I have great regard, because at the end of that briefing I realized this is very much a little bit of a sham—there will be as much partisan advertising three years from now as there was three years ago. Mark my words.

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): I'd like to rise again today in this House to speak in support of this bill because I believe it's a strong, great bill for the people of this province, another promise being implemented to protect the people of this province and to protect the taxpayers' money.

I was listening with great interest to the honourable member from Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge when he was showing those government documents. I guess every house in this province got one of those. What a waste of money. Instead of this money being invested in our school system or our health care, it was invested in self-promotion for the government.

Another thing I was always concerned about was that as you drove on Highway 401, you saw a huge sign that said, "Your Ontario tax dollars at work" and underneath it, "Mike Harris," so another promotion.

Interjections.

Mr Ramal: How much money was spent on these advertisements to promote the government, to promote the ministers? Shameful. At the same time we had a collapse in the health care system; education was a disaster. The past government spent tons of money left and right to promote themselves, to get re-elected. What happened on October 2? They didn't get anywhere.

I believe when we invest the money in the right spot, if it's a good example, a good direction, people will remember that and will elect you, not by sending promotional papers left and right. Waste goes into the garbage. I believe the money has to be invested in the right spot. That's why I'm standing here today in support of that bill. I believe our government is going in the right direction and it will continue to go in the right direction. Also, it's another promise to be implemented. I'm proud to be part of this government.

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I look forward to following up on a couple of comments of my colleague from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, and the definition of "advertising" is one.

I know the Minister of Tourism spoke today in the House about providing some literature on the promotion of Ontario. I'm not sure what information will be in those as of yet. We've requested copies in the past to find out whether there's information or whether there are pictures there.

What really is the definition of "advertising"? This is being televised as we speak. Is that advertising or promotion? Is it based on the fact that expenditures go out in order to provide information? Providing information for the understanding of legislation as it comes forward was the original intent for coming forward with a lot of these things. But when you look at some of the contents of the bill, subsection 1(2), for example, "For the purposes of this act, the deputy minister of a ministry is the head of the ministry," some of that difficulty may come in, as the members of the government said, in what happens in an emergency situation like that. Do you have to go through a process where you're dealing with the deputy minister to get that information, as was the case

with SARS, where it is prior-approved? If they don't think it's necessary to get that out or the expenditure is not there, then—I've had the opportunity and privilege to be sitting in the minister's office—sometimes they question some of the information getting out and delay that process, whether by intent or design or whether it's just to make sure it's the right thing. You sometimes need to get that information out right away, possibly in radio ads and things like that. In the event of emergencies, I think an exemption should be allowed.

Not only that—there isn't a lot of time in a two-minute question and comments—if the government really doesn't believe it's something they should follow up on in communicating the message, why don't they just not put the information out rather than going through the process of establishing a bill and all the committee hearing process etc? I appreciate the opportunity and look forward to hearing further comments.

1650

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge has two minutes to reply.

Mr Arthurs: I thank the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford for his comments in respect to looking for some definition with respect to advertising. And certainly we'll look forward to the member from Niagara Centre's enlightened comments at a subsequent point of time. I'm glad he took the opportunity to be thoroughly briefed on the bill ahead of time. I thank the member from London-Fanshawe for his support of the bill, and the member from Oshawa for his comments with regard to issues around emergency situations.

Let me briefly speak to a couple of those matters. The issue of the definition of advertising: If one looks to the bill, it speaks quite clearly about what advertisements are. It speaks to paid advertisements published in newspapers and magazines, displayed on billboards or broadcast on radio and/or television. It's quite clear where the media are that are involved with that and what constitutes advertisement in my view. It speaks to printed matter under a separate section of the act, section 3. That speaks to mass mailings, householders of that nature. Bulk mail or its equivalent that are so broad in nature that they fall under the category, and paid advertising by ministries, the cabinet office and the Premier's office are included.

The matter of emergency exemption is covered under the legislation. I'm sure we'll have further debate, but there are provisions in the event of emergency. It certainly made reference to the situation, whether it be a SARS-type scenario or a blackout scenario, where advertising can go forward immediately to meet those kinds of criteria.

I'm sure that as we move forward, things will be tighter and tighter. Regardless, there's lots to debate in the bill. This only the first day of second reading. I'm sure there will be lots of comments and observations because it's the type of legislation that strikes close to home for many on both sides of the House. I know that the minister, myself and others will look forward to that debate.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): Before I begin, I just wanted to pay tribute to a former Nepean councillor, Al Brown, who passed away of ALS. Al was a member of Nepean city council from 1978 to 1988. He'll be greatly missed by so many in our community. We want to extend our best to his wife, Mary, his two sons and his two grandchildren.

I'll be sharing my time with the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford.

I'm pleased to have a chance to rise and speak to Bill 25, carried in the name of the Chair of Management Board, Gerry Phillips. The one thing I'll say to the people watching on TV who might have been listening to Peter Kormos, my friend from Welland, is that when he speaks on this bill—which would likely be for the hour, when it next is called on the order paper—I hope he talks about posters. Billboards are covered, as the member for Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge said, but posters aren't.

I have seen these lovely posters of Howard Hampton that are about this big: full four-colour posters. These posters are from when he was Minister of Natural Resources. These were posters printed in four colours, the entire poster of the then minister. Howard Hampton was sporting a beard at the time and is wearing a nicely hand-knitted sweater. I don't know whether it was knitted by a loved one, a family member—

Mr Kormos: He could have knitted it himself.

Mr Baird: It could have been knitted by himself—or whether it was knitted by someone else. This four-colour poster has got to go down in history as the most self-aggrandizing advertising ever paid for by taxpayers. I know the member from Niagara Centre will want to talk about that big poster. There's no information about MNR on it. But I know he'll want to talk about it and he'll want to get his comments in on it.

Mr Kormos: Bring one in.

Mr Baird: I would love to bring one in, but it's a prop and I would never use a prop.

I'm pleased to talk about Bill 25, presented by the Chair of Management Board. People often say, "Judge people by what they do, not by what they say." That's very wise. Gerry Phillips stood up in this House very sanctimoniously—I like Gerry Phillips. He's a good guy, a good minister, a good individual, a man of great integrity. He will make a great Minister of Finance in the not-too-distant future. On December 11, he tabled this government advertising bill. What does Gerry Phillips do while he is talking against government advertising? He publishes partisan advertising. Guess what colour his ministry, the Management Board Secretariat, has chosen for their new magazine? Is it Tory blue? No. Is it green? No. Is it purple? Is it yellow? Is it black? Is it white? The masthead of the first publication of *Topical* under the Liberal government has been changed to the exact same colour as Liberal Party red. You can actually take the document and go up to a Liberal campaign sign and it's the exact same font.

Gerry Phillips must have been so embarrassed that in the first advertisement taken out by his ministry they've

adopted Liberal red, the exact same font, the exact same print code number. When asked about it by the media, the public servants there said it was just a coincidence. Give me a break.

I go to this document that Gerry Phillips put out. He must have been embarrassed. This is a photocopy of it, I say to my cackling friends in the back there. I look forward to hearing them speak as well. I've got the document here. It is indeed in Liberal red. I read with great interest, as the member for Pickering said, that the act says on page 4, "It must not include the name, voice or image of a member of the executive council." Guess whose smiling face is on the front page of *Topical*, the first advertisement of the McGuinty government? It's Dalton McGuinty. It's a very nice picture of Dalton. It's got the Ontario flag right beside him and he's smiling. You've just got to wonder what Gerry Phillips must have felt like, being the first person to break his own act. Heads must have rolled over at Management Board, I say.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): No, they didn't fire anybody. They promote them.

Mr Baird: They probably promoted them. You're right.

But the first thing they do is a big, four-colour, Liberal red masthead on the cover of this public service publication. I say this to the people watching over there where they've got Gerry Phillips's assistant. This is a photocopy, because I don't have a coloured copy with me.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Nepean-Carleton, I said government documents can be shown but not flaunted.

Mr Baird: Thank you, Speaker. I just want everyone to see the picture of Dalton McGuinty smiling on the front page of this document. We know how seriously this Liberal government is taking this act when they put a smiling four-colour picture—not a black and white newsletter, but a four-colour advertisement with Liberal Party red on the masthead, just by coincidence, and they sent this out. So this is how seriously Gerry Phillips takes his bill on advertising.

This is just a game that the Liberals play. They don't want to talk about their broken promises, so they trot out one of these public relations gimmicks. They're very good. I bet you're going to say, "Well, it's just one single newsletter." It's not.

I am fortunate to be the culture critic for the Conservative Party, for the official opposition. I am perhaps not a very good culture critic because I like the minister.

Interjection.

Mr Baird: It's a nice picture. I'm not the hypocrite on this. I wasn't on the soapbox. I am not the hypocrite on this and I'm not on the soapbox complaining about it.

Anyway, I am the culture critic. I am not particularly good at that task because I like the Minister of Culture, so I can't be very critical of her. She's a neighbour of mine in Ottawa and I think she's a very capable individual.

1700

But one of the agencies that she is responsible for is the Trillium Foundation. On the front page of the Trillium News, another government publication, you've got not one picture of the minister, but two—two pictures of the minister. This, you say, must contain information about a government policy. But it says right here on page 4, "It must not include the name, voice or image of a member of the executive council," and there is not one, but two.

I say to Madeleine's office, if you are watching, it's the Trillium News, the newsletter, and they've written a glowing article about the minister. I've got to love this. This came out after this bill was introduced. I thought, "Wow, this must be another broken promise for the Liberals." I wondered, "Could it only be one picture?" But it's two. Then I look inside the newsletter and here is this smiling face of Marie Bountrogianni, the Minister of Children and Youth Services. She is in there too; so is Sheila Copps. Madame Copps is in here as well, another smiling Liberal face. We keep going, and there's a third picture of the minister. I said, "That can't be the case," because it says right here that it must not include a picture of a member of the executive council or a member of the Legislative Assembly. But here's a picture of the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell. They've broken the law. They brought you into this crime.

I say to the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell that he is an honest, capable fellow and he shouldn't be brought into this crime being perpetrated by the McGuinty government. It's unbelievable. But it gets worse.

Interjections.

Mr Baird: I say to my fan club behind me here, I'm not the one who ever said there was anything wrong with this; you are.

There's also a picture of my good friend Liz Sandals. She's in the picture in this brochure too. She's right there. There she is. She has a shovel in her hand, and she's shovelling it. I tell you, when she goes on about taxpayer-funded advertising—she literally has a shovel in her hand. It's most interesting. So it's, "Do as I say and not as I do." So we know what happens when these folks are breaking the rules. Oh, my goodness, there's another picture of Madeleine Meilleur on page 8. I say to Madeleine's office, if you're watching: si vous regardez la télé, si vous regardez la controverse du projet de loi, du débat aujourd'hui, c'est absolument terrible.

There's another one. Right below the fourth picture of Madeleine Meilleur, there's a picture of George Smitherman, Minister of Health. Isn't it funny how there's not a single picture of a member of the opposition, just members of the government?

Mr Leal: John, you had your own publication last fall.

Mr Baird: I've never complained about it, so at least I'm consistent. At least I'm not a hypocrite.

That is the Trillium News, by the culture critic.

Interjection.

Mr Baird: I'm going to go on.

They haven't put any pictures of the member for Nipissing, so she must be getting angry that they don't put her picture in anything.

Gerry Phillips must be mad that they broke it again but, by God, heads must have rolled at Management Board, and you say it'll never happen again. It happened again. Just this month, April 23, another picture on the front page in four colours—a smiling picture of the Chair of Management Board on this advertisement. They printed up thousands of them. My information says they printed up 80,000 of these four-colour—a very nice bond quality, not the cheap newsprint. They're distributing them around the province, tens and tens of thousands of them, with Gerry Phillips's picture on the front.

I say, Gerry, is this the same man who tabled this bill saying there will be no more pictures of members of the executive council in these government publications? Shame, shame, shame. Gerry Phillips has broken his own law again.

We could balance the budget. We could have a jar to put on the clerks' table, right next to my good friend Doug Arnott—we could put it right there—and you could put a dollar in every time you break this law. Just from my short 12-minute speech, we'd already have raised about \$12 toward balancing the budget, which would be good for this year. Because Gerry Phillips—again, a full-colour front page. There's no member of the opposition in any of these.

This is what the public most despises about the McGuinty government: they breed cynicism in politicians. They say they'll do one thing before election day and do another afterwards. There were pictures in some publications of members of the executive council, and we were not critical of that in the past, so I'm just looking to hold the government of the day accountable.

I know Gerry Phillips will want to personally have the Liberal riding association pay back the taxpayers. They made tens of thousands of copies of these things—absolute propaganda—with Gerry Phillips's face on the cover. I guess he was mad that Dalton got his face on the cover once. I will say the picture of Dalton is nicer. It's got a flag, and he's smiling. Gerry is not smiling that much. I don't have a problem with Gerry putting himself on the front of this, but I just think it violates his own act. Gerry, if you are watching, you must be embarrassed. You must stop this propaganda machine. "Say as I do, not as I say."

But it doesn't end there.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): What did you do, John?

Mr Baird: I didn't criticize this; that's what I didn't do.

Mr Levac: Do you like the bill?

Mr Baird: I'm just saying that I would like to see the government follow its own law.

Right now there is an exhibition for people considering construction careers going on until tomorrow afternoon at the National Trade Centre at the CNE. I wish the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, who I know is in the other room—you should come back in,

Mary Anne, because you're going to be talked about next. Ontario has a booth there to try to recruit construction tradespeople, and there is a big quote and the name of Mary Anne Chambers on that. I can just see that some young person going into construction really needs to hear from the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, and that quote, with her name in big, bold lights, is probably going to make them want to pursue a career in the trades. So there again, the Liberals are breaking their own word.

We're just getting started. We could go on and on and on. I say to the member for Pickering, you must be embarrassed to see all this stuff after the speech you just gave.

I was also interested to notice, when I went back to my constituency, as I do every week, and I was reading my constituency newspapers—I represent a riding that is a little bit less than half rural. We have a lot of community weeklies in my riding and every single one of them had the same ad, talking about this government's new policy on water regulation. When there was bad news, they blamed the water regulation on the previous government, but when they were trying to tout it as a new environmental accomplishment, they were out in each and every one of these publications. They were placing paid advertising to tout what a great record they have on water quality and the environment. I have no doubt that would have been put on the spend-o-meter of advertising that the Liberal rat pack used to keep, so I know they would want me to raise that.

I am discouraged by two points in this bill. Two additions that would make it better are that it should cover image consultants as well; not just paid advertising, but it should cover image consultants, because if we could have included the \$25,000 of taxpayer-funded money that Dalton McGuinty spent going down to Bill Clinton's image consultant in Chicago, it would have been interesting to see what the Provincial Auditor would have said about that. Bill Clinton had an image consultant—

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): Do you want to talk about image consultants?

Mr Baird: I never spent \$25,000 on an image consultant. At the time this was released—they did an image makeover for Dalton—I asked that a value-for-money audit be done on it because I don't think the taxpayers got value for money. There was no value-for-money audit.

Interjections.

Mr Baird: I've really riled them all up over there. They should get on the speakers' list over there. But the advertising bill should include money for image consultants, particularly American ones who work in Chicago.

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I thought, well, did Dalton and his staff just jump in the van and drive to Chicago? It's not too far. That's what families from Welland would do, wouldn't they, if they were going down to Chicago?

Mr Kormos: We don't cross-border shop. We buy Canadian.

Mr Baird: They buy Canadian.

But, no, they flew first-class down to Chicago. It's only an hour and 10 minutes, the flight, but Dalton flew first-class down to Chicago. I thought that was quite something. So I'd like to seek an amendment to this bill to ban taxpayer-funded image consulting that is done in the United States. As the member for Niagara Centre says, if you want to do it internally, we'd maybe give an exemption for that.

I would like to point out another section of the bill, and the member for Niagara Centre should listen to this, because the member for Niagara Centre got on this one very quickly. Section 2 of the act puts an exemption, and this one is a great one. This is what the member for Niagara Centre would call the Mack truck exemption. I did watch with interest the speeches before I got up, the speeches by—who was speaking before? Not just my friend from Pickering but—

Interjections.

Mr Baird: No, it wasn't him.

Mr Leal: Mississauga.

Mr Baird: Mississauga. I listened. He read quite a good speech that someone—did you write it? I think one of those two wrote it over there. Anyway, it talked about an exemption where, and I'm going to quote, "the primary target audience is located outside of Ontario."

The member for Niagara Centre would call that the crack cocaine of advertising loopholes, because what this will allow Dalton McGuinty to do is to run advertisements on Buffalo TV, on Rochester, New York, television, on Detroit television, marketing Ontario, which just happens to flood the airwaves in Ontario. I used to see those advertisements with Ernie Eves on them, or Mike Harris, and Dalton McGuinty said he was going to end that. I'll tell you, the Liberal double-speak, where virtually 99.9% of advertising dollars that went out on television could probably—put it on CNN so that when people in Ontario watch CNN, they'll find out how great everything is in Ontario.

The Chair of Management Board talked about—

Interjections.

Mr Baird: That's tourism advertising. I don't travel to Florida because I think they have a good governor. I don't travel to California because I think they have a good governor. So it's something interesting and funny.

They have left in the bill the Mack truck of loopholes, and I'll tell you, that would make Mike Harris blush. Mike Harris wants an apology for all the criticism that was made of his advertising, because obviously it's endorsing Mike Harris.

I do love that they are going to let the Board of Internal Economy, as was reported by my friend from Pickering, be the deciding voice. The Board of Internal Economy has a 4 to 2 majority for the Liberals, so the Liberals will be able to do everything they want.

Interjection.

Mr Baird: I say to the member for Nipissing, Peter Donolo's contract will not be covered by this. Peter Donolo is a prominent Liberal who got an untendered contract like that, as soon as the Liberals took power.

Interjection.

Mr Baird: Oh, it was tendered, but it just happened to be that Jean Chrétien's right-hand man, John Manley, gave a tendered contract to Jean Chrétien's left-hand man, Peter Donolo. What a coincidence, I say. Of course, this is only the beginning of the Liberals' regime, so it's quite interesting.

I would understand why the Liberals are cackling behind me, because they're embarrassed because their party is not fulfilling another election campaign commitment. They're breaking promises.

Another amendment I'd like to see to this bill would be to include the federal government. The federal government has some unique advertising practices, as was reported by Chuck Guité. I'm talking about the sponsorship program. I can remember these Liberals would be so smug and arrogant about how they're going to be in government everywhere. I'll tell you, when Stephen Harper becomes Prime Minister of Canada he's going to do great things and he'll smarten up these smug Liberals here at Queen's Park. I say to those people watching—

Interjection.

Mr Baird: Joe Clark, you can have him. I say to the people of Ontario watching, you will get an opportunity soon to pass judgment on the sorry record of the Liberals here at Queen's Park and you can vote Conservative federally. I think that is something that will be most interesting. When Stephen Harper takes his message of accountability to taxpayers, the people of Ontario will find out what real accountability is all about, and they are going to be held to account. And just as Stephen Harper did well in the leadership in Ontario, he is going to do very—

Interjections.

Mr Baird: Stephen Harper is going to do well in Peterborough, I say to the member for Peterborough. I think he will. I think he's going to win Nepean-Carleton. You bet your boots, I do. I think we're going to win many seats.

Interjections.

Mr Baird: If you want to talk about Nepean-Carleton, our candidate Pierre Poilievre is running and putting advertising out as well, and he puts a picture of me in his advertisement. He wants to show that he's got a lot of support. Pierre Poilievre will be a great Conservative MP in Nepean-Carleton. We'll have a good Conservative member for Peterborough. That will be helpful as well. I say to my friends from eastern Ontario, the Liberals are going to have a minority of seats on our side of Kingston by the time the election rolls over. We've got a great candidate who is running. Gord Brown is going to advertise. He's going to run in Leeds-Grenville. We've got a great candidate. We've got two sitting members of Parliament seeking re-election. We've got a great candidate in Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh. I tell you

that we're going to surprise a lot of people. I'm surprised the Liberals wouldn't have wanted to make some reference to federal advertising or federal sponsorship in this act. Because Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin—

The Deputy Speaker: The member from Nepean-Carleton, I too, would like to hear some words about advertising and Bill 25.

Mr Baird: I would like to see federal advertising and federal sponsorship covered in this legislation as well. I think that would be a good idea—like the money going to Groupaction. Why wouldn't that be covered in the bill? That money comes from Ontario taxpayers and is robbed from our hospitals to go to Groupaction. We saw Chuck Guité come forward at the federal public accounts committee and talk about how Terrie O'Leary, Paul Martin's right-hand woman, was directing advertising to go to firms with Liberal ties, like Earncliffe. So I think that was interesting. It will be interesting to see if they entertain amendments to this bill in committee. But we will see.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The member for Nipissing, come to order, please.

Mr Baird: The member for Nipissing should get time to speak, she's got so much to say on this issue.

One concern I do have with respect to advertising is a serious issue with respect to federal-provincial relations. One of the previous speakers—I think it was my colleague from London-Fanshawe—spoke about advertising beside highways on highway construction. I had a constituent come up to me once—this is the honest-to-God truth—and say, "How come the provincial government isn't putting money into our highways?" I've had other, similar experiences. One story that I'm familiar with is they said the federal government is putting all that money into the TransCanada Highway. "Why isn't the Ontario government doing any?" I said, "Where's this?" And they said, "Well, you know, the TransCanada Highway, Highway 401, the Macdonald-Cartier Freeway, named after two Fathers of Confederation." And I said, "Wait a minute. That's not the feds putting that money in. That's all Ontario taxpayers' dollars, because the feds aren't putting any money into Highway 401."

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So you bet your boots Ontario taxpayers should know who's paying and who's not paying, and that Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin and the federal Liberals have sold Ontario out. Taxpayers should know who's paying for what, so they'll know who's not paying. So that's something that I understand they're sensitive to.

I'd like to see a little bit of government advertising for public transit, because in Ottawa we're not getting any funds for public transit from the McGuinty government. All of our taxpayers' dollars are going to fund the Toronto Transit Commission. The Minister of Transportation is here. He made an announcement on, like, December 23 in the middle of the night about funding for the Toronto Transit Commission because they were embarrassed they were giving so much money to Toronto

and no money to Ottawa. I say to the Minister of Transportation, I'm going to keep up this battle until you give funding for transportation in Ottawa to OC Transpo. I'm going to keep up the fight, and eventually you will have to back down. You will have to give Ottawa some funding for transportation because Norm Sterling and I are going to continue to fight until you give in, until Dalton McGuinty realizes he's not just the Premier of Toronto, he's also the Premier of the rest of Ontario. We're looking forward to it.

I agree with the Liberal Party candidate who ran against me in the 1999 election in Ottawa on what, for those of you not from Ottawa, is called the O-Train. I call it the Zero-Train. But our mayor, Bob Chiarelli, has this crazy idea of having these dirty diesel trains going on existing tracks. Let me tell you about the O-Train and why I'd like to see government advertising in the transit system, as was referenced by the member from London-Fanshawe. I'd like to see government advertising so we would know if taxpayers are going to pay for this boondoggle.

Let me tell you about the O-Train project and why we might need some advertising about how bad it is. You have to drive to a parking lot in an area of suburbia which is not of high growth. You then take the train, which is diesel-powered, and you get off at a dirty, contaminated landfill site and then wait for another bus which takes you into the city. I don't think that's a good use of taxpayers' dollars. I agree with the former Liberal candidate who ran against me in 1999 that it's not a good use of taxpayers' funds. It's a Bob Chiarelli legacy issue. I say to the Minister of Transportation, if you're going to give the money, give it for public transit, the buses, not the Zero-Train, because your Liberal candidate had it right in Nepean-Carleton in 1999 on that issue, and that's a huge concern with me. Perhaps if there was some advertising—there used to be advertising on the buses: "The operation of this transit system is financially assisted by the government of Ontario." You don't want to put that on the Zero-Train in Ottawa.

I say to the Minister of Transportation, I hope I'm getting somewhere in this fight, because we're going to get you to back down and give some money to Ottawa eventually. Norm Sterling, the member for Lanark-Carleton, and I are going to keep up our fight, because we don't hear anyone standing up for Ottawa around here. We don't hear anyone standing up for Ottawa. Not a squeak. Ernie Eves, at the end of our government, had one full minister from the 416 area code; this government has eight. That's an 800% increase in the number of full ministers from the city of Toronto.

Mr Levac: Hear, hear.

Mr Baird: The member for Brant cheers the lack of representation in his part of the province. I think it's shameful.

But in addition to having eight powerful ministers from Toronto, which includes the big spenders—health and education—the riding of the next big spender, the Minister of Transportation, borders 416. And we wonder

why money keeps going to Toronto. Maybe we should advertise where the money is going, so that people in Ottawa will realize that our taxpayers' dollars are going to Toronto and not Ottawa.

Interjections.

Mr Tascona: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm right behind the speaker and I can't even hear him, for the comments made by the other members. Can we have a little bit of decorum here?

The Deputy Speaker: We certainly can have some decorum if the speaker will stick to Bill 25.

Mr Baird: So I am tremendously disappointed that they don't want to put advertising about where taxpayers' dollars are going because then people in Ottawa would find out that the government of Ontario isn't spending money any money on public transit in Ottawa. All the money is going to Toronto. Mississauga wants some money. Brampton wants some money for transportation too, but it's all going to Toronto. I see the member from Hamilton here. No big announcements on transit in Hamilton, because it's all going to Toronto. Toronto is a fantastic city. We want to ensure that its needs are taken care of, but the member for Kitchener-Waterloo wants some money for transportation too, but he can't speak up. He is being muzzled.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Nepean-Carleton, you and I are going to share the floor until you get back to Bill 25, please.

Mr Baird: So that is the notion. I believe we need to advertise where taxpayers' dollars are spent so that people will know. Otherwise, the taxpaying public has no alternative but to tune in to the parliamentary channel and listen to me tell them where their taxpayers' dollars are spent. Sometimes, if you don't advertise, we leave it to the politicians to tell us.

I'd say we haven't heard any advertising going on about transportation investments in Ottawa because they can't do any, because they haven't made any investments. I feel badly for my friends Madeleine Meilleur and Jim Watson. They are struggling against the 416 wave, and if we could do advertising, that might help. Thus far we have not been able to do that advertising, but I am sure that Norm Sterling and I will eventually prevail and we will force this government to do the right thing and to make some transportation investments in Ottawa. I'd be happy to advertise that.

Let's recap, re-look at this whole issue. I will make some concluding remarks and then viewers will be able to listen to the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford speak to this bill. The Liberals are saying one thing and doing another when it comes to government advertising. They have adopted the Liberal Party colours for the government brochure. This isn't, like people say, "just a few hundred brochures." It's going to 60,000 people. They just, by pure coincidence, changed the colour to be Liberal Party red. It was just a coincidence. The Liberals win a majority government and they change the colour to red; it's a pure coincidence. Smiling pictures of Dalton McGuinty, talking about how nice he is to people. Self-

servicing advertisement. And this is by Management Board, the gatekeeper to this bill. Gerry Phillips should be embarrassed. He should be ashamed. He should stand in his place and he should apologize, not just to me, not just to the taxpayers, but he should apologize to the rest of his caucus for embarrassing you the way he has done this.

It's not just once; he did it again—another taxpayer-funded photo with a picture of a member of the executive council, against section 3 of this act. If advertising with a picture of a member of the executive council was a capital crime, Gerry Phillips would be off to the gallows. The people who preach one thing when they are sitting on this side of the House should be pretty careful that they don't think we'll throw it back at them when they walk to this side of the House, because it's only four metres from this side of the House to that. But it might as well be a million miles when it comes to the consistency of these Liberal ministers.

So we know that they have adopted Liberal Party red on all sorts of government-paid advertising.

Interjection.

Mr Baird: On OPG, I'm pleased that you have appointed a former Mulroney minister to be chair of OPG.

Mr Leal: Jake Epp's a great guy.

Mr Baird: Jake Epp is a great guy, the guy that I called in to clean things up. So you have appointed a former Mulroney minister to be the head of Ontario Power Generation. I congratulate you. In all seriousness, I think Dwight Duncan and the Premier and the government have made a phenomenal move on that. He is an exceptionally capable individual who will do a great job for taxpayers. He got a lot of experience working for Brian Mulroney. I know the minister of tourism would be particularly excited about that. We're pleased to see that. It's a good appointment.

I'm glad you brought up OPG, but I'm going to get back—

Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): What happened to Deb Hutton at OPG?

Mr Baird: Deb Hutton never worked at OPG; you're wrong.

I'm going to come back to Topical. They've changed the colour to official Liberal Party red. Management Board—I hope heads are rolling over there. Are you watching? They adopt Liberal Party red. "It's a coincidence," they said.

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Second, they break the section prohibiting pictures of a member of the executive council—the smiling picture of Dalton McGuinty. He's got a nice smile on his face. He has the flag on, so he looks very presidential, right on the front page, top fold; not just once, but they did it twice. Gerry Phillips's own picture went on the front in full colour. They've even improved the bond quality on this paid advertising. Madeleine Meilleur is a very attractive minister in all eight of the photos in this. She's profiled, and there's a nice story written about how great

she is, in this paid advertisement from the government. You go down to the convention centre and see all the stuff about construction careers, with big quotes, mounted with big lights on them, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

People will look at this bill, then they'll look at your record and they'll be absolutely outraged that you are breaking another promise. You're breaking another promise that you made to the people of Ontario. This has been exposed as being a cheap political stunt. You've embarrassed Gerry Phillips. He's so embarrassed he couldn't even sit here, because he knew I had these publications. I don't blame him for not being here. The poor man was embarrassed because your communications machine let him down.

The Deputy Speaker: The member will remember we don't talk about other members' absences.

Mr Levac: On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: I think the point of order has been taken.

Mr Baird: They've had members of the cabinet who are afraid to be here, face the music and defend their actions. I don't blame them at all.

Interjection.

Mr Baird: I understand it's a sore point, I say to the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford.

When the NDP come and speak next, I hope they talk about the big glossy pictures of Howard Hampton wearing a nice sweater. I do have a copy of it.

Ms Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): What colour is the sweater?

Mr Baird: The sweater is beige and it's got a nice pattern on it.

Ms Mossop: Do you have it in your office?

Mr Baird: I don't have it up in my office.

Interjection: Do you have a sweater like that?

Mr Baird: I don't. I don't wear sweaters too often.

Ms Mossop: He's not a sweater guy.

Mr Baird: I'm not a sweater guy—exactly—I say to my friend from Stoney Creek.

I'm going to push for amendments to this bill. I'm going to push that political image consultants from the States be covered in this bill, so that Bill Clinton's image consultant, who advised Dalton McGuinty on how to comb his hair—I still think there should be a value-for-money audit done of Dalton McGuinty's makeover.

Interjections.

Mr Baird: They're so arrogant now. It took us years to get that arrogant. It took us five or six years to become that arrogant. All I'm saying is, why hasn't Paul Martin called the election? Despite all the advertising he's been doing, he's afraid to call the election because he knows Ontario voters will have their first opportunity to pass judgment on the provincial Liberals—down 11%. The dog catcher in Nepean has a higher popularity rating than the Premier does.

Mr Milloy: What about Joe Clark?

Mr Baird: What if Joe Clark's popularity rating isn't as high either, I say to member for Kitchener?

I do hope the government will consider these amendments. I will also present an amendment which I will call the Group Action amendment, to stop money going to Liberal campaign people like Peter Donolo, who got a paid contract. Jean Chrétien's left-hand man gives the right-hand man a contract. My goodness. And it was tendered. Honest to God, it was tendered. Does anyone believe that? We're finding this information out. They won't release a lot of information.

We will continue to push for amendments to this bill. We're going to be informed now by my hard-working colleague from Barrie, who's going to give a great speech. Another individual, another Conservative, Patrick Brown, will be elected in Barrie to fight for Ontario taxpayers in the federal election. I hope he'll talk about Patrick.

Mr Tascona: I am pleased to follow the member from Nepean-Carleton. I think he set out very clearly what his position was on Bill 25, in terms of what he thought about that. But I think what's important is it's called the Government Advertising Act, 2003, but what we've been hearing all day today in the debate is about partisan political advertising. The purpose of the bill is to provide for a review by the Provincial Auditor of specific types of advertising generated by government offices, as defined in section 1 of the bill. I looked at section 1 of this bill and I didn't see anything with respect to advertising. What we have here is, it defines what a government office is, it defines what an item is and it defines "prescribed." I didn't think they'd have to define "prescribed," because it's fairly obvious what "prescribed" means. To the general public, it just means "regulation." But there is no definition of what advertising is, and I think that's kind of important. There's going to have to be an amendment as to what advertising is, because they're talking about partisan political advertising throughout this bill.

The bill supposedly establishes an independent review of government-based advertising, as the Liberal government believes this is an abuse of the public purse. That's the premise behind this bill. The issue, even with this legislation, will be how the line will be drawn between advertising that does not offend the legislation and advertising that offends it, even though we don't know what advertising is, because that hasn't been defined. The application of the criteria will still be subjective.

That's what's interesting about this bill, because there are standards under section 6 of the act. It says, "The following are the standards that an item is required to meet." That's why they defined "item." "Item" means a reviewable advertisement, reviewable printed matter or a reviewable message, as the case may be." So "reviewable" means what the auditor can look at. It goes on to say that the item, "must be a reasonable means of achieving one or more of the following purposes," but what is more interesting is it goes on to set out what would be the standards.

The substance of the bill is under sections 2, 3 and 4, which deal with advertisements, printed matter for bulk

delivery and other classes of messages, requiring them to be given to the Provincial Auditor for review. If the matter is urgent, affecting public health or safety or the provision of goods and services to government offices, it does not have to be submitted. Thus begins the subjective question as to whether these expenditures apply.

Looking at the standards set out in the legislation—and the member from Nepean-Carleton pointed out specifically the Topical that just came out. The Topical is news and information about the Ontario public service and it's published by the Management Board Secretariat. In other words, it's published and paid for by the Management Board Secretariat. In this one—this is the April 23 edition, and I think he pointed it out—the heading was "Government Leads by Example to Reduce Energy Consumption," and then there's a very nice picture of Management Board Chair Gerry Phillips in this Topical, which is given to the public service.

What I want to do is look at this and see whether it satisfies the standards that are set out in the legislation. I'm going to deal with standards 2 to 5, because it certainly would appear to match and satisfy the first standard: "It must be a reasonable means of achieving one or more of the following purposes." I guess it would satisfy subparagraph i, "To inform the public of current or proposed government policies, programs or services available to them." So when the government says, "Government Leads by Example to Reduce Energy Consumption," certainly that's a government policy. We'll give them that.

The second standard is, "It must include a statement that the item is paid for by the government of Ontario." So when it says, "published by Management Board Secretariat," I guess in spirit it might satisfy that, because you would have to presume, even though it doesn't say that expressly, you would have to say it implies that it must be paid for by the government of Ontario. It doesn't say that as a statement, so it wouldn't satisfy standard number 2, because it doesn't expressly say it's paid for by the government of Ontario. Implicitly it does, because they publish it.

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The third standard is, "It must not include the name, voice or image of a member of the executive council or a member of the assembly." Obviously, it fails that, because we have a picture of the Chair of Management Board; we've certainly got his image, if not his picture. So this wouldn't satisfy the third standard.

The fourth standard: "It must not be partisan." I don't know what "partisan" is, because it's not defined in the legislation, but I guess that's subjective too. If you are trying to promote your policies, I guess that's viewed as partisan, and if it's not in the public interest—I guess where it's a balancing act is, does it promote the government policies; is it in the public interest? I think that's probably under the first standard as we deal with it. But it must not be partisan. Who knows what that is? It's going to be up to the auditor to make that decision.

The fifth standard is, "It must not be a primary objective of the item to foster a positive impression of the

governing party.” Now, there you go. Maybe that’s why they shouldn’t have 4 in there, “It must not be partisan,” because there’s no doubt when you look at this, “Government Leads by Example to Reduce Energy Consumption,” that the primary objective of that certainly has to be fostering a positive impression of the governing party. There is no doubt about that. That’s the purpose of this Topical with respect to Management Board: “Government Leads by Example to Reduce Energy Consumption.” Obviously, the primary objective is to foster a positive impression of the government. I would say it does that not only by the picture of the Management Board chairman with the people surrounding him, but also by the headline. So certainly when you apply the standards to the Topical—if in fact that is going to be covered by the act, and that’s debatable—it wouldn’t meet the standards set out in section 6 of this legislation.

When you look at this, what would the Topical fall under? I look to the sections of the act that apply. Section 2 of the act: “This section applies with respect to any advertisement that a government office proposes to pay to have published in a newspaper or magazine.” Obviously, I would say, looking at the Topical, it would fall under that. But then you’d get into a debate, because the government would say, “This is not an advertisement.”

Well, if this isn’t an advertisement, certainly it’s government information trying to foster a positive image with respect to what they’re doing, so you’d have to go to section 4, which says, “This section applies with respect to such additional classes of messages as may be prescribed,” which means set out in regulation, “that a government office proposes to convey to the public in such circumstances as may be prescribed.” Certainly, Management Board is a government office—there’s no doubt about that—and the section applies “to such additional classes of messages as may be prescribed.” So if the Topical doesn’t fall under section 2 because it’s not advertisement, certainly it would fall under section 4, if the government chooses that it should fall under section 4 in terms of the spirit of what’s going on here. What it’s trying to do is convey a positive message of what the government is trying to do through government-paid information.

Since we don’t have a definition of what advertising is, and if this Topical falls through the cracks, what we have here is contrary to the spirit of Bill 25, which is designed to stop partisan political advertising. I wouldn’t say advertising; I would say partisan political messaging. That’s what we’re talking about here, because what the act is really dealing with is messaging put out by the government. It’s not restricted to just advertising, because when you go to the definition of an item, it means “a reviewable advertisement, reviewable printed matter or a reviewable message.” It’s much broader than advertising. So it’s not misleading, but certainly it’s designed to deal with advertising, printed matter—which the Topical is; it’s printed matter—or a reviewable message.

For this to get covered, it has to be reviewable, so it would have to be covered by section 4, if and when the government decides to put out the regulations for what kind of messaging or printed material is going to be covered, because there’s no doubt that this is designed to convey a positive image of what the government’s doing with respect to energy consumption.

In my view, when you look at the standards being set out in the statute, when you’re putting a picture of a member of the executive council where the primary objective of the item is to foster a positive impression of the governing party, and you know that this item is paid for by the government, certainly that has to be covered as reviewable or printed matter with respect to a message that should be covered under this legislation. I would hope that’s going to stop once the legislation is passed.

Moving on with the legislation, you have subsection 5(2), which establishes that “the decision of the Provincial Auditor is final.” Therefore, there is no recourse under the legislation for those who disagree with the auditor’s decision. How does this affect the jurisdiction of the advertising council, especially when you look at the fact that the Provincial Auditor has no real enforcement powers under this act beyond a reference in the auditor’s annual report?

Section 6, as I set out before, sets out the standards and the meaning of partisan advertising, printed material or messaging. The bill, I would say, deals with regulating or banning the promotion of partisan political interests of the governing party. That’s what it’s really intended to do, but it does not specifically address advertising which attacks the opposition. There’s nothing in that statute that will cover that off. The statute deals with partisan political interests of the governing party, whether it’s advertising, printed material or messaging. It does not deal with specific advertising which attacks the opposition. That certainly should be covered under any amendments.

Section 8 gives the government the authority to revise the material in question and resubmit it.

Section 9 requires the auditor to include the functioning of this act in the auditor’s annual report. There is also the power to make special reports.

Section 11 governs the immunity of persons who publish, display, broadcast or distribute material which comes under this act where it has not been approved for distribution. That’s a peculiar section. I don’t really know why that’s in there. How are you supposed to have accountability if you make the individuals who are doing this immune from any action? It’s almost similar to the Adams mine legislation, which gets rid of any proceedings. It’s very similar to that. It says, “No action or other proceeding shall be brought against the person who conveys to the public on behalf of a government office a reviewable message on the sole ground that, under this act, a government office was not permitted to convey it to the public.” That gets into the lack of teeth and actually any enforcement powers that are given to the auditor or to the advertising council.

Section 12 gives the government authority to enact regulations dealing with virtually all matters set out in this bill.

Section 13 amends the Audit Act to provide for the appointment of an Advertising Commissioner to perform such duty as may be delegated to the commissioner, such as powers to be exercised by the auditor under the act.

Really, the only check on this situation is the auditor putting information in his report. There are no other checks or balances with respect to dealing with the government when they put out improper information that's not allowed under the act—or the people who print it for them, who are given immunity.

The framework of the legislation, the real substance of it, will be contained, in my opinion, as I said before, in the regulations. An amendment should be sought to ensure that such regulations are tabled in the Legislature, prior to coming into force so that they can be the subject of a full discussion. I think that's fair. It's been done before. I think the Minister of Consumer and Business Services has done that in some of the areas he's covering with respect to consumers.

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The role of the Advertising Commissioner is not well defined in terms of the process of appointment and the terms of reference of the position etc. With no appeal from the decision of the auditor, there is no recourse should the opposition disagree with the decision. Who are you going to go to? Are you going to go to the Speaker? Maybe your only recourse is to go to the Speaker with respect to the privileges of the members being infringed by the government with respect to this legislation.

Will the government utilize the exemptions from this review process, as set out in clauses two, three and four, for virtually all government messaging to the public? That's a question. Does this prevent advertising on a US channel received in Canada? It doesn't. That's a total loophole with respect to using a US channel to convey positive messaging with respect to the government.

I would note that subsection 6(2), "Advertising outside Ontario," says, "Paragraph 3 of subsection (1) does not apply with respect to an item for which the primary target audience is located outside of Ontario." That section is where the advertising includes "the name, voice or image of a member of the executive council or a member of the assembly." So obviously, the Premier would be allowed to present the message outside of Ontario; for example, where he's going to try to promote tourism to the state of New York. I know the members opposite were quite critical of our government with respect to Mike Harris in terms of any advertising that was done to promote tourism with respect to the United States. But that doesn't address the fundamental loophole that's been put in here, where it doesn't prevent advertising on a US channel or, we'll say, a provincial channel, whether it's in Quebec or Manitoba, that's received in Ontario or received in Canada. Subsection 6(3) really doesn't close

down any loophole. That's a major loophole with respect to promoting government interests.

I'm finished at this time.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Kormos: I listened very carefully to the remarks of the member for Nepean-Carleton. He persisted in making reference to the poster of one Howard Hampton. The member for Nepean-Carleton was familiar with the clothing and with the texture of the clothing. It was a sweater, I'm told.

I scurried, as I'm wont to do from time to time, down to our suite of offices and I scoured Mr Hampton's office looking for this poster. I came up with all sorts of posters and Howard Hampton, www.publicpower.ca. I discovered posters of Howard Hampton that were used in the last provincial election campaign, with of course our Web site, www.publicpower.ca. I saw the posters of Howard Hampton that were used in the pre-election period, again with the Web site www.publicpower.ca. So I went to the [publicpower.ca](http://www.publicpower.ca) Web site. There were yet more pictures of Hampton and there were NDP positions on retaining public services, on investing in public education, on investing in public health care at www.publicpower.ca. I couldn't find the poster though.

I persisted in going through www.publicpower.ca, and I saw the NDP policy position on a number of issues. I was impressed at how profound and practical they were—real solutions, and really, solutions for the future, not solutions of the past. I reflected on the fact that in the last election people in Ontario voted for change and ended up getting more of the same.

The poster of Howard Hampton, www.publicpower.ca—I encourage people to take a look at the Web site. For the life of me, I don't know what the poster is that the member for Nepean-Carleton was referring to. If I had the poster, I would have shown it to you. I would have flaunted it, in fact, but here I am, with just www.publicpower.ca. Take a look yourself.

Ms Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): I rise in support of An Act respecting government advertising. I believe this is something that we ran on and something that the people I met at the door were very concerned about. People at the door in Nipissing were very tired of getting the propaganda in their mailbox that the previous government provided. It was nothing short of propaganda for their—

Interjection.

Ms Smith: I'm sorry. I'm not supposed to hold up props. You're right.

But I would like to address some of the props that the member for Nepean-Carleton addressed. He spoke about Topical, which is in fact a publication put out by Management Board Secretariat—

Interjection.

Ms Smith: I'm sorry, Mr Tascona. You probably referred to it as well, but I'm hoping you weren't as colour-blind as the member for Nepean-Carleton.

Ms Mossop: It's purple.

Ms Smith: It is definitely purple. This is not red.

The publication is put out by Management Board Secretariat and is news and information about the Ontario public service. It is put out for the public service to provide them with information about what's going on in the public service, including JOBmart, which provides postings for jobs. It is not printed in red. It is not government propaganda. In fact, the only picture of the minister in this particular edition that I'm looking through is of the minister talking about his energy consumption initiative, which is an initiative of this government that the public service has been asked and encouraged to participate in.

Mr Tascona: I highlighted that.

Ms Smith: Oh, which you highlighted. Thank you, Mr Tascona. That's very kind of you.

I would just address the member for Nepean-Carleton and his concerns and say that I find it appalling that he is opposing this legislation.

Ms Mossop: You feel sorry for him.

Ms Smith: I do. I feel sorry for him because he's colour-blind, but I'm also appalled at the blindness he has about his own propaganda. He was very proud of his picture in one of these brochures, and I think he should be embarrassed that his government put this out and that he would in any way compare it to legitimate literature that our government is putting out for our public service.

The Deputy Speaker: I said government literature shouldn't be flaunted.

Ms Smith: He was also very keen to talk about pictures of members, and I would just note that there is a picture of one of his fellow members in the Citizen today that he wouldn't be terribly proud to have drawn our attention to. So I would thank the other members—

The Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired. Questions or comments?

Mr Levac: I want to thank the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, who always does his best to try to stick to the topic. I appreciate when he does that. On the other hand, the member from Ottawa-Nepean-Carleton—I think I got that wrong, but as best I can—basically tried to inflame the rhetoric and pushed it out there to the degree that I was quite prepared to stand and use the standing orders where it says quite clearly in the rules of debate that a member shall be called to order by the Speaker if he or she “makes allegations against another member, imputes false or unavowed motives to another member, charges another member with” deliberately issuing a falsehood. I took the time not to do that, Speaker, because I know that in one case you ruled on it.

Other than that, I want to make a point about this: The people want this legislation; It's as simple as that. They are very much aware of the fact that the previous government spent an awful lot of money, approximately \$250 million of taxpayers' money, to build themselves up and to make them look like they were the guys and there was nobody else around.

I want to make another quick point, and somebody needs to remember this one; I loved using this during the election. The government also, during its use of consult-

ants, spent—get this one—\$75,000 an hour, seven days a week. That's 24 hours a day, seven days a week that \$75,000 was being spent by the previous government on consultants—every single hour. Can you imagine what all of us could do with \$75,000 an hour? Lend me a few hours' worth for my education system. Lend me a few hours' worth for my transportation system. Lend me a few hours' worth for my health care system. Lend me a few hours' worth for the running of this place.

Quite frankly, we are headed in the direction that I know the entire population of Ontario wants us to go, and that's transparent, clean government spending taxpayers' money wisely.

Ms Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): I am delighted to speak on this legislation. Every candidate across this province knocked on doors and spoke to people in their ridings. There was not an issue that resonated more with constituents than the foolish spending of their hard-earned money.

I remember being at one doorstep. It was a modest home. The people worked hard for what they had. They asked me to remember them if I got elected and as I governed. They said, “Please remember us. Please remember that when you spend money, you are spending our money.”

This legislation shouldn't be necessary. Politicians should spend money respectfully. They should remember where it came from. They should remember who paid the bills. It's just outrageous to me that governments spend money on what are, in essence, political pieces. I'm very proud to support this legislation. I think it shouldn't be necessary. It was made necessary because of the flagrant abuse of the last government. I'm proud to be part of a government that will address the situation.

Whether it's spending on partisan advertising or spending on other items that some would consider to be frivolous and not addressing the issues the taxpayers ask us to address, I am saying to all of us, let's remember the people who put us here. Let us remember the taxes they are paying, the money that we are taking from them to spend wisely for them, not for us.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford has two minutes to reply.

Mr Tascona: I'm very pleased to respond to the comments made by the members from Niagara Centre, Nipissing, Brant and London North Centre. I'm going to focus on the comments made by the member from London North Centre, and I think I'll quote her. It should be in the Hansard. She said, “This legislation should not be necessary.” I just want to remind the member that you're the government. Why is it necessary, if we're talking about government advertising here? You can police yourself. It's like the NHL owners saying to the players, “Protect us from ourselves, because we don't want to pay you those salaries.” The government here is saying, “We'll protect the Liberal government from ourselves. That's why we're putting in this legislation: so we don't do it.”

I can say the legislation shouldn't be necessary. Don't have any advertising. You won't even need this legis-

lation. That's just quite to the point. So why are you doing it? Because you're policing yourself. At the end of the day, you're going to police yourself with respect to making sure that you don't spend taxpayers' money improperly. That's fair game. I can respect that.

Interjection.

Mr Tascona: To the member from Brant: Let's be to the point about consultants. You've already hired consultants. I hope that doesn't come back to bite you with respect to how many consultants you end up hiring, because everybody knows that consultants are hired all across the country. So we'll keep that in Hansard. You're

going to have to be careful about what you say about consultants, because you've already hired consultants and you probably will continue to do so.

I helped the member from Nipissing, especially with respect to highlighting this. I think she did a very good job with respect to this. I don't know whether she called this propaganda or not. I'm just pointing out that it was partisan, that's all.

The Deputy Speaker: It being past 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 1:30 of the clock on Tuesday, April 27.

The House adjourned at 1803.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Beaches-East York / Beaches-York-Est	Prue, Michael (ND)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Marsales, Judy (L)
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Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)		

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

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