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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 5 May 2004

Mercredi 5 mai 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
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Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 5 May 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 5 mai 2004

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PLAN

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): The government talks a good game when it comes to protecting Ontario seniors and our public health care system, but many seniors have written to me because they are concerned that this government may not be walking their talk at all. They feel threatened.

Many of these letters that I have received in my office come from members of the McConaghy Seniors' Centre in Richmond Hill. I just received another package of letters from residents in a seniors' building at 71 Dunlop Street in Richmond Hill. I want to read into the record one of those letters, forwarded by Mrs Dorothy Baker on behalf of her neighbours:

"As a senior in Ontario, I wish to register my strong opposition to any changes in the Ontario drug benefit plan.

"Seniors on fixed incomes have no overtime, no bonuses and, in many cases, have no place to draw from. Many of us will not be able to afford vital medication. Please remember, we are the largest low-income group in Ontario and we simply cannot afford any more erosion into our income.

"We prefer to stay out of hospital or long-term-care facilities, but if there are any increased drug costs we will have to make the choice between food or drugs.

"You must reconsider making any changes to the ODB and must take it off the table."

This government is headed in the wrong direction. They must not go ahead with this intention of increasing costs to our seniors

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I'm proud of the McGuinty government's commitment to protect over 800,000 children across Ontario who ride on 16,000 school buses each and every day. The former Tory government wasted eight years by refusing to provide vehicle liability as a mechanism for convicting dangerous drivers who recklessly pass school buses with their warning lights flashing.

I would like to thank the Marcuzzi and Loxton families for their support throughout the last eight years. I also want to thank the 50,000 people who signed petitions—the parents, students, teachers, bus owners, bus drivers, police, municipalities and community organizations for their support of my school bus safety initiative.

If passed, this comprehensive safety package will allow charges to be laid against the owner of a vehicle that is reported to have illegally passed a school bus. It would require all school buses to display signage warning of a \$2,000 maximum fine for illegally passing a school bus. Also, new school buses will be required to incorporate a number of safety design improvements, such as child safety crossing arms.

If passed, this bill will provide a new additional mechanism to increase compliance with the existing law against illegally passing a stopped school bus. We are doing this to protect the children who ride school buses in Ontario.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS AWARENESS MONTH

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): May is MS Awareness Month, and I am pleased to support the work of the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada and its thousands of volunteers. We can be proud of Canadian researchers, who are world leaders in the search for a cure for this all too often disabling disease. Many MS research projects are taking place right here in Ontario.

Earlier this week, the MS society announced a new groundbreaking study of MS in children. Members need to know that MS can strike children as young as three. Researchers at the world-renowned Hospital for Sick Children are working to find the cause of MS and to determine who is at risk of developing the disease. In true Canadian fashion, they are collaborating with researchers across the country at more than 20 hospitals and universities.

At the Ottawa Hospital, researchers are in the midst of a clinical trial to find out if bone marrow transplantation can stop rapidly progressing MS. At the University of Guelph, investigators are trying to find ways to regrow the tissue that is the target of MS attacks. We can be proud of the work that Ontario researchers, funded by the MS Society of Canada and its related Multiple Sclerosis Scientific Research Foundation, are doing to benefit people with MS here and around the world.

This week, everyone should buy a carnation, say thank you to one of the thousands of volunteers, and give hope to every Canadian who is suffering from this terrible disease.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): Last night I attended a meeting in my riding with parents from elementary and secondary schools across the riding. They had come to tell me about what's happening in their schools and give me some front-line feedback on how the previous government's cuts to public education have affected, and continue to affect, their schools.

All schools agreed that staffing cutbacks have hurt students. The poor and rushed implementation of the new curriculum has left students and teachers unprepared. They need learning resources. They want us to move forward. They feel they've had enough.

French immersion programs that are recognized internationally are lacking resources. Staffing formulae are too inflexible, so that for want of one and a half students, a school is denied a teacher. Principals are spending too much time on administrative tasks. There aren't enough VPs in the schools, and there are libraries without librarians.

I want to say that I'm encouraged that the Premier has made education this government's priority, and I am delighted to see the Minister of Education's vision so clearly articulated in the latest education round-table paper. The previous government deliberately and systematically eliminated programs and supports that help students in this complex city. It accused parents of fabricating stories, as it stripped "frills" like music and gym teachers, librarians and educational assistants from Toronto classrooms.

It's time for us to repair the damage. That's what we ran on, and that's what we're going to do. Parents in Don Valley West are encouraged by the new tone set by this government, and they're looking forward to our changes.

1340

HEALTH CARE

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I just returned from Washington, DC, where I had the opportunity to help "rock the vote," alongside Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton and Jeanne Shaheen, former governor of New Hampshire and Senator John Kerry's national campaign chair, a keynote speaker at this year's inter-national women's conference of the United Steelworkers of America. Fittingly titled Women of Steel: Building Political Power, the conference saw over 400 Canadian and American female members of the steelworkers' union convene to address how they can mobilize in the upcoming US presidential election and the federal race in Canada. And we all know what a powerful momentum Steelworkers create when they unite, especially when women get together.

These delegates left the conference feeling galvanized to make their voices heard and votes count. So federal Liberals and Conservatives will soon find themselves contending with this dynamic group on the ground.

A major theme at this conference—Senator Clinton and others spoke about it—was trying to bring the Canadian health care system into the American system. The point was made that we must preserve and enhance what we have here, not tear it down, while the Americans strive to rebuild and have what we have today.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): Today is national raise the price of gasoline day. I know every day of the year is, but this one is symbolic.

Constituents come to me and say: "How do they determine the price of gas? Is it random?" No, it's not. There's a very scientific process: On a moonlit night in a forest glade, the senior executives for the oil companies dance naked around a giant gasoline pump. As they dance, they draw random slips of paper out of an oil barrel. If the slip of paper says, "Putting prices up would hurt working families," they're thrown out of the circle. If the paper says, "It will hurt our economy," they're thrown out of the circle. If it says, "Our farmers won't be able to compete," they're gone. But if it says "A holiday weekend is coming; let's raise the price by 65 cents a gallon," they get to stay.

They continue this scientific exercise until there is one, and only one, left. At the time, this giant pump has variable rotating numbers. The number that shows is a price of gasoline that company can charge. It really doesn't matter, because they'll all change their prices to match it the next morning anyway. It is scientific, and they have a program for it, called Greater Returns are Expected Every Day, or GREED for short. So if you want to know what they base their prices on, they're based on GREED.

TRANSPORTATION

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Yesterday, the Minister of Transportation made an announcement on legislation that proposes changes to the Highway Traffic Act. Clearly, the announcement was made to cover the disappointment of the member for Chatham-Kent Essex. Obviously, he was a candidate who expected to be in cabinet. By resurrecting his private member's bill, the Premier has made some peace in what is becoming a tired and fractured government.

There are many questions surrounding the proposed changes. Are proposed fines to vehicle owners a sneaky way of reinstating the NDP photo radar tax grab? I believe they are. I expect the minister will begin the photo radar tax grab by allowing cameras to be installed in school zones. How can fining the owner of a car that someone else is driving possibly save lives and improve safety around school buses? It can't, and that is why it is a tax grab.

The Liberals promised 1,000 new police officers in their platform. To date, we have seen none, zero. How many officers will it take to police the cars with children as passengers? Will every child require a birth certificate to prove their age when travelling in a vehicle? Will every police officer need to have weigh scales in their cruiser to weigh children who are under 80 pounds? What about adults, or children over the age of eight who weigh less than 80 pounds? Will police officers be required to carry a measuring tape to measure the height of those who are under 4 foot 10? What are we to do with senior citizens who are under 4 foot 10 and do not weigh over 80 pounds, or even some of our pages?

This desperate attempt at improving safety is nothing more than a smoke-and-mirrors, flawed first step in reinstating the NDP photo radar tax grab.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS AWARENESS MONTH

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): May is Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month. In Canada, an estimated 50,000 people live with MS, some 20,000 in Ontario. MS is a disease that attacks the central nervous system, causing a wide range of symptoms, from vision problems to numbness to problems in walking. Canada has one of the highest rates of multiple sclerosis in the world.

Fighting a disease as complicated as MS takes the work of many people. The Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada and thousands of volunteers across Canada are making a difference for individuals living with this disease.

In Ontario, more than 40 local MS society chapters provide vital programs for people with MS and their families. Up-to-date information about MS, a helping hand and a sympathetic ear are just a phone call away.

Interjection.

Mr Levac: I hope the member is listening carefully.

The MS society also raises funds to support MS research that is making a difference right now to people with MS in Ontario, in Canada and in the world. We can all be proud that Canadian support of MS research on a per capita basis is the highest in the world.

The annual MS Carnation Campaign is taking place across Canada this week. I urge all members to support this fundraising event.

Locally, I'm very proud of the volunteers and staff of the MS society and thank Patti Sayles and the entire board, led by Richard Carpenter, for their hard work and dedication to this cause.

The Super Cities Walk for MS was a huge success in my riding, and I was proud to take part, as always. We can all be part of an effort to end the devastating effects of MS.

BY-ELECTION IN HAMILTON EAST

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): There's a by-election cooking in Steeltown, and this

Liberal government has shown its lack of respect to Hamilton East by betraying the very commitment to openness and democratic renewal that helped get them elected in the first place.

As we saw in last night's candidates' debate, PC candidate Tara Crugnale is holding the government to account for its deceptions. As the night progressed, it became clear to Tara Crugnale and those in the audience that when Dalton McGuinty ignored the cornerstone of our political process, hand-picking his own nomination candidate à la Paul Martin, he also shut out the people of Hamilton East.

This is an insult to the time-honoured democratic nomination process and an insult to the good people of Hamilton East, who have been repaid for past support by not being consulted in one of the most hastily called by-elections on the books. McGuinty has shown Hamilton East no respect.

As I door-knock, I hear dissent. Recently, Hamilton councillor and Liberal Sam Merulla refused to endorse the Liberal candidate after being threatened to either support him or face the consequences. Merulla said that he never backs down from a threat and is throwing his support elsewhere. There are whispers this is truly a "buy" election. Recent pork-barrelling has been a cynical ploy to grease the wheels. Hamilton East voters are looking at their options, and Tara Crugnale is one of them.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Would all members join me in welcoming Mayor Mike Hancock of Brantford, Mayor Dick Kirkland of Point Edward, Mayor Lynn Peterson of Thunder Bay, and Mayor John Rowswell of Sault Ste Marie to the assembly today.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

KEEP YOUR PROMISES AT THE PUMP ACT, 2004 LOI DE 2004 SUR L'OBLIGATION DE TENIR LES PROMESSES ÉLECTORALES À LA POMPE

Mr Bisson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 74, An Act to provide for an interim freeze in the price of certain petroleum products / Projet de loi 74, Loi prévoyant le gel provisoire du prix de certains produits pétroliers.

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

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): This bill should ring bells in the Liberal caucus for one Mr Bartolucci, who introduced the same bill about three or four years ago when we went through the problem of high gas prices in the province of Ontario. Mr Bartolucci

had a wonderful idea that we supported—and God bless Mr Bartolucci—that we freeze the price of gas to the price of 2003 in this particular bill. I think it was a great bill when Mr Bartolucci introduced it. My caucus and I supported the bill, and we look forward to the support of Mr Bartolucci and all the Liberal colleagues in the caucus for our bill.

1350

**RETAIL SALES TAX
AMENDMENT ACT, 2004**

**LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA TAXE DE VENTE AU DÉTAIL**

Mr O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill: Bill 75, An Act to amend the Retail Sales Tax Act / Projet de loi 75, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la taxe de vente au détail.

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

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): The Liberal government has just recently been forced to recognize that a tax on soup and salad or a Happy Meal was simply cruel; in fact, it was wrong. This private member's bill simply adjusts the tax exemption status on a family meal to better reflect today's cost of living. I recommend that the Minister of Finance, my good friend Mr Sorbara, consider this in his May 18—

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask that the table review that bill carefully. From the sound of the member's description of the bill, it may in fact be out of order. I would ask the table to check that and inform the House as to whether the bill is in order.

The Speaker: Have you completed reading the bill?

Mr O'Toole: I reflect on a couple of bills that have been introduced in the House that did encourage the government to spend money. I fully recognize that that's not in compliance with the purpose of private members' business. But this does—

The Speaker: I get the impression that you're debating the bill.

Let me just comment on your point of order: I am not able to determine where the bill is going to be, so I'll allow it to go.

But I hear you debating the bill.

ELECTION AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

**LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT
LA LOI ÉLECTORALE**

Mr Patten moved first reading of the following bill: Bill 76, An Act to amend the Election Act / Projet de loi 76, Loi modifiant la Loi électorale.

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

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): This bill has a purpose. The purpose of it is to add the candidate's

political affiliation to the election ballot, a change that has been advocated by several members in this Legislature, past and present. The bill represents, I believe, an important step in the democratization of our system in Ontario. I look forward to debating this in a couple of weeks, on May 20.

MOTIONS

HOUSE Sittings

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I move government notice of motion number 58: Pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm to 9:30 pm on Wednesday, May 5, 2004, for the purpose of considering government business.

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

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

All those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1356 to 1401.

The Speaker: Mr Duncan has moved government notice of motion number 58. All those in favour, please rise and be counted by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Parsons, Ernie
Baird, John R.	Gerretsen, John	Patten, Richard
Barrett, Toby	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Bartolucci, Rick	Hardeman, Ernie	Pupatello, Sandra
Bentley, Christopher	Hoy, Pat	Qadri, Shafiq
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hudak, Tim	Racco, Mario G.
Bountrogianni, Marie	Jackson, Cameron	Ramal, Khalil
Bradley, James J.	Klees, Frank	Ramsay, David
Broten, Laurel C.	Kwinter, Monte	Runciman, Robert W.
Bryant, Michael	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ruprecht, Tony
Cansfield, Donna H.	Levac, Dave	Sergio, Mario
Caplan, David	Marsales, Judy	Smith, Monique
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Martinuk, Gerry	Smitherman, George
Colle, Mike	Matthews, Deborah	Sorbara, Greg
Cordiano, Joseph	Mauro, Bill	Tascona, Joseph N.
Craitor, Kim	McGuinty, Dalton	Van Bommel, Maria
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Watson, Jim
Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wilkinson, John
Di Cocco, Caroline	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Dombrowsky, Leona	Milloy, John	Wong, Tony C.
Duguid, Brad	Mitchell, Carol	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duncan, Dwight	O'Toole, John	Zimmer, David
Dunlop, Garfield	Orazietti, David	

The Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please rise.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Marchese, Rosario	Murdoch, Bill
Kormos, Peter	Martel, Shelley	Prue, Michael

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 68; the nays are 6.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

**PREMIER'S AWARDS
FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE**
**PRIX DU PREMIER MINISTRE
POUR L'EXCELLENCE
DANS L'ENSEIGNEMENT**

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): Today I rise to announce a celebration, a celebration that is new and different and long overdue. It is time, quite simply, to celebrate excellence in teaching in the province of Ontario.

I'm announcing today the Premier's Awards for Teaching Excellence. Next to parents and families, who play the most important role of all, teachers are the greatest single influence over our children's future.

Chaque journée scolaire, la société confie aux enseignants et au personnel de soutien de nos écoles notre plus précieuse ressource, soit nos enfants. Notre tâche la plus stimulante consiste à en faire de bons citoyens et des travailleurs compétents.

It's not an easy job being a teacher, Speaker, as I'm sure you will appreciate, especially when we send those children in groups of 25, 30 or more, children who are all different in terms of their ability, their background and their home environment.

We ask our teachers to teach math and reading, to lead the "healthy body" talk and the bake sale, to pass on conflict resolution skills and good eating habits, to coach sports and put on a play, to fill many roles, and at the same time to be role models. We present them with countless challenges, but we also entrust to them limitless potential—the potential of every student to dream, to achieve, to excel, to learn. Great teaching can and does unlock that potential. Think about the moments a great teacher can author: the moment a boy realizes he can read a book; the moment a girl realizes she can master math; the feeling of winning a race for the first time, or just the feeling of being in the race for the first time; the realization that a bully can be stopped if everyone stands up to the bully; the notion that there is a world beyond your neighbourhood, and even beyond your high school, and that you can not only go there, but can do great things when are you there; the instant that you take centre stage or take centre court or take your place at a science fair and experience what it's like to have people rooting for you, applauding you, even cheering for you. These moments are teaching moments, great teaching moments.

Someone once said that teachers never know where their influence will end. I am sure that in all of our lives there are teachers we remember and whose influence is continually felt by ourselves.

I remember Madame Jacqueline Guillet, my grade 5 teacher, whose enthusiasm for music was absolutely infectious. She taught me and my pals to love singing. I'm sure the result was nothing less than painful, but the fact is that we actually enjoyed it.

Jean-Pierre Groulx was my grade 8 teacher, but the reason I remember him is because he was an absolutely wonderful volleyball coach.

Paul Howard taught me grade 9 history and he made those historical figures come to life.

Fidel Palumbo taught me Italian in grade 13, and when we walked into that classroom, we were walking into Italy. We were taught that Italian was not just a language, but a way of life.

Dr Yernini taught me grade 13 physics and he made physics for us nothing less than exciting.

I remember my teachers, as I'm sure we all do. Their influence is continually felt in our lives. So it is entirely fitting that we celebrate great teaching and great teachers. We're going to celebrate enterprise in teaching, teachers who inspire the spirit of innovation in our children by demonstrating innovation in the classroom. We will celebrate teachers and support staff who foster leadership by teaching what it means to lead.

Nous allons rendre hommage aux enseignantes et enseignants qui obtiennent la participation des parents, qui rendent la communauté énergique, qui démontrent une compréhension du fait qu'aucun d'entre nous ne peut éduquer un enfant aussi bien que nous tous ensemble.

We're going to celebrate teachers who show a special ability and commitment to teaching children with special needs. We're going to celebrate teachers who best prepare children for their entire lifetime. We're going to celebrate teachers who have spent their lifetime achieving great things in teaching. We will celebrate teachers who make great strides in teaching literacy and numeracy. We're going to celebrate our new teachers. We're going to celebrate the staff, aides and assistants who support excellent teaching.

We will celebrate teachers by singling out outstanding individuals in each of these categories as an example of the fine work done by so many teachers right across our province. Our most prestigious award will name one elementary and one secondary teacher as Teacher of the Year, again as an example of the tremendous work done by so many teachers each and every year.

1410

This is, in reality, only a small gesture, but we believe it is an important one. As a good teacher might remind a young pupil, saying "thank you" is a small thing until you neglect to do it. I want our teachers to know, and I want our parents and students to know, that the war against teachers in Ontario is over. The war is over. Civility commands it and our children demand it. They demand that we adults work together in their interest and we intend to do that.

A new future for public education has begun in Ontario. We understand that if we get public education right, we get the best citizens and we get the best workers, who build the strongest society and the most prosperous economy. Excellence in teaching is fundamental to excellence in public education.

William Butler Yeats said it best: "Education is not filling a bucket, but lighting a fire." We are going to celebrate those teachers who demonstrate excellence when it comes to lighting that fire, nurturing that burning desire in our children to learn.

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I am pleased to rise today to speak to the announcement made by the Premier about the Premier's Awards for Teaching Excellence. I have to say that I, along with the media, was somewhat disappointed this morning by the announcement, not because we don't want to reward teachers for achieving excellence in their profession—we support that whole-heartedly—but I think we were all expecting to hear more concrete plans for the government's future vision of education.

We have a government of Ontario that promised they would help children who need it the most. Instead, today we've learned that all they offer is platitudes. They are talking about bringing peace and stability into the classroom, while 240 teachers who teach some of Ontario's most vulnerable students are on the picket line. We have a government that promised a moratorium on school closings, but now we hear that a moratorium means "not till after the election."

We have a government that promised to give teachers the tools and training they needed for excellence in teaching. It's common sense to make sure that our teachers are the most qualified and skilled professionals. Teachers shape the minds of tomorrow's leaders and should ensure that their skills are up to date at all times. But the Liberal government doesn't understand this. In December 2003, the Liberal education minister promised to cancel the professional learning program for teachers, leaving the Ontario College of Teachers with \$600,000 in leasing fees alone, and this isn't accounting for any contracts that are outstanding.

We have a government that promised they would put in place a hard cap of 20 students per class for kindergarten to grade 3, but today we still are waiting for their plan. Mr McGuinty and Mr Kennedy are unwilling to share their plan for implementation and unwilling to give Ontarians the straight goods on the cost of this initiative. The Liberals claimed this initiative would cost \$375 million, but Ministry of Education experts estimate it at \$1.63 billion to implement. Where is their plan for this cost?

Dalton McGuinty and Gerard Kennedy want to go back to the old days of no standards in education. Ontario cannot reach for tomorrow by going back to yesterday. There needs to be a comprehensive plan to move forward, a plan that emphasizes quality and excellence through higher standards and more accountability, not by lowering the bar.

In today's world, education is key to success, giving young people the skills needed to compete in a global economy. Education helps students become responsible citizens and is one of Ontario's keys to prosperity. Today, I would like to congratulate the teachers who have excelled in their profession. I do not want to downplay the importance a good teacher's influence can have on the province's children. However, I hope the new government will give you the support necessary to continue to be the best, most up-to-date and relevant teacher that you can be.

I would like to share my time with the lady in the front row.

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I just want to say that I'm personally very pleased to see that new awards are going to be provided to celebrate teaching excellence in Ontario. As a former secondary school teacher and as a former trustee and chair of the Waterloo County Board of Education, as it was then called, I will tell you that it is extremely important that we acknowledge and recognize outstanding teachers in the province. And certainly as the former Minister of Education, I have had the pleasure throughout my life, starting from the time that I was a student, to have been blessed with many hard-working, dedicated teachers.

In fact, I can tell you that when I first came to Canada and I didn't know the English language, it was my teacher in kindergarten and grade 1 who helped to take my grades from an F to an E. It was because of the dedication of Mrs Helen Jermyn, who spent the time with me during recess and after school.

These awards are something that I know the Premier knows that we were planning to introduce as well. Our party certainly did support these awards. I want to congratulate all of the teachers in the province for their dedication and commitment, and for making such a tremendous difference in the lives of the young people in this province. Certainly, my personal experience tells me that they are all winners. Congratulations.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I want to say, with all due respect, as lawyers say, that there is nothing inherently bad about the idea. It's good to be able to celebrate the achievements of teachers. I think teachers will like it. Yes, there are already a couple of awards honouring and celebrating the achievements of teachers—and add one more by the Premier. What the heck. It's a good thing, not a problem. But at some point the teachers are going to say, "Show us the money." At some point the teachers are going to say, "Monsieur Kennedy, what about the promises you made?"

They feel good about this announcement, no doubt. I'm sure the teachers you talked to today—I was there—feel good about the announcement. I felt OK about it. But I thought I was going to a press conference where the Premier was going to announce something big. I didn't expect that this would be the announcement; I expected some dough to be announced on the promises they made. Let me remind you about some of the problems we have and some of the promises you made.

First of all, all boards are in the dark about how much money they're getting. They ought to have known a month ago or longer, but they're not going to know until the end of this month sometime. They need to plan for September, and they still don't know. They're in the dark. Teachers are in the dark. And we're waiting for the Premier, Monsieur Kennedy and Monsieur Sorbara to announce how much money our boards are going to get.

Two, kids at risk: Monsieur Kennedy used to love to talk about how many kids are at risk at the Toronto board—and so did I, for that matter. And he used to, like

me, talk about the fact that youth counsellors were being fired by the Toronto board because they were under-funded by the province and, oh God, how bad it was for the kids who were at risk, who would be failing and dropping out, troubled kids who needed help. We needed to keep youth counsellors in the system. Gerard was there saying, “Don’t worry. When we get elected, we’ll fix that.” There’s not a peep from Gerard, not a peep from Greg and not a peep from the Premier about whether they’re going to replace the youth counsellors.

You remember, Gerard, about the curriculum casualties. You used to talk at length about the curriculum casualties and how many thousands of students were falling through the cracks because of the policies of the Conservative government, and indeed, they were. Gerard said at that time, “Kids can’t wait; we need to fix the system now.” Six months into government and there’s not a peep about how they’re going to fix the problem in this coming September for those curriculum casualties, not one peep. Gerard, where is the money to fix that problem? Another broken promise.

1420

Dr. Rozanski said that we need to put back a whole lot of money. Gerard, in the debates with him, agreed that we needed to implement the recommendations of Dr. Rozanski. We’re talking about putting back \$1.1 billion. Is Gerard saying the money is coming? I don’t hear him saying that.

We talk about school closures. Last December, I remember Gerard saying, “We are imposing a moratorium on school closures.” In my view, “moratorium” means not one school will close—not one. Yesterday, in response to a question, Gerard said 97% of the schools are open; therefore, the moratorium is OK in his mind. Sorry, Gerard, “moratorium” means not one school will close.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): How many are closing?

Mr Marchese: Forty-four schools will close this September, and more and more will close after that. I remember Gerard talking about the problem of community use of schools and how so many high school students are in trouble and need a place to go and have recreational places where they can play. He said, and I said, that we need to fix that problem.

Ms Martel: No response.

Mr Marchese: I haven’t heard a peep from Gerard Kennedy about how they’re going to fix the problems with the community use of schools and the fact that so many of our kids can’t afford to use our gyms. I’m waiting for you, Gerard, and I’m waiting for you, Premier, to make the important announcements.

Premier, I celebrate teachers all the time. I say, as I said when the Tories were in power, that teachers are the real heroes. They are. But I’m getting awfully tired of this “peace and stability” and “war on teachers” and “we love them” kind of stuff. I’m waiting for you, Premier and Greg and Gerard, to show us the money. Keep your promises. Make the promises work.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): My question is for the Premier. I have in my hand a document bearing your signature, and I’d like to read it for you. It says:

“Taxpayer protection promise

“I, Dalton McGuinty, leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario, promise ... not to raise taxes” and not to run deficits, and “I promise to abide by the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act.”

Premier, it’s got your signature on it.

I want to ask you a very clear and direct question: When you make such a clear and unambiguous commitment, promise and personal pledge to the people of Ontario, can we count on your keeping that promise?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): I can tell you that the greatest disappointment experienced by the electorate, shortly after the last provincial election, was their discovery that the former government had hidden the truth from them when it came to the size of the deficit: a \$5.6-billion deficit. All the while, the previous government had claimed that no such deficit existed.

That remains a real issue with the people of Ontario. We intend to change the law to ensure that can never happen again, and that when we go into an election, people know the real state of the finances.

Mr Baird: Your chief financial adviser while you were Leader of the Opposition, Gerry Phillips, clearly warned you there was a \$5-billion risk in the province’s numbers. You personally voted for the taxpayer protection act. No one put a gun to your head and forced you to do a photo op and media stunt with the Ontario Taxpayers Federation. Now, in a premeditated way, you’re about to break the law of Ontario.

My question to you, and it’s a direct question, is: Do you think that door-to-door salesmen who commit fraud should go to jail, and how is what you’re doing any different?

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): That language is a little unparliamentary; as a matter of fact, it is unparliamentary. Would you like to withdraw?

Mr Baird: I would withdraw the word “fraud,” if it causes you concern, and replace it with “scheme.”

The Speaker: Order. Could you just withdraw?

Mr Baird: Withdraw.

The Speaker: Premier?

Hon Mr McGuinty: Speaker—
Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. We just started question period. Would you like the Premier to respond? Premier.

Hon Mr McGuinty: I’m sure my friend opposite would be interested in taking a look at the copy of the 2003 Ontario budget, infamously known as the Magna budget. It says in here that that budget was to be balanced. They and the Premier maintained, that throughout the course of the campaign, when in reality there was

a \$5.6-billion deficit. If anybody here is guilty of doing anything that was offensive to the people of Ontario, surely it was the former government.

Mr Baird: Taxpayers in Ontario feel deceived, they feel scammed, they feel conned, they feel swindled and they feel hoaxed. What we're seeing in Ontario is nothing short of massive electoral fraud. Will you stand in your place and say that you will keep your promise to the people in the province of Ontario and keep your word—

The Speaker: Order. On a point of order?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Moments ago you found the words "fraud" and "hoax" to be unparliamentary. I would suggest that the member opposite, in his temper tantrum, used those terms again.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The tone of your question is becoming quite unparliamentary, so could you just withdraw those comments?

Mr Baird: I'll withdraw that and say swindle, racket, hoax, deceit, sham—

The Speaker: Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I'm asking for co-operation from all members. Also, the member from Erie-Lincoln, I'd like your co-operation with this.

Now I'm going to address the member from Nepean-Carleton. I'm going to ask you to withdraw, and I don't want—

Mr Baird: Withdraw.

The Speaker: Thanks. Premier?

Hon Mr McGuinty: To try to introduce some civility into this exchange, if there is one thing that offended the people of Ontario during the course of the past eight years, it was the devastation caused to their public services. It was the fact that they lost water inspectors; it was the fact that they lost their meat inspectors; it was the fact that they lost nurses by the thousands; it was the fact that their schools came under attack; it was the fact that this was a government that no longer assumed its responsibility as a government to defend public services. That's what offended the people of Ontario.

The Speaker: New question?

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): My question is for the Premier as well. I have in front of me the December 2003 issue of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation publication with the headline, "Now He Must Keep His Word." Right on the front cover, we have a smiling Dalton McGuinty and a clearly pleased John Williamson of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. I'd like to see Mr Williamson's face today, knowing that he was duped and his organization used by the Liberal Party in a cynical scheme to persuade Ontario voters that you would be responsible keepers of the public purse.

Premier, your signing of the taxpayers' protection pledge is a major reason why you are sitting in that seat today. Why are you betraying the public's trust?

1430

The Speaker: Order. Today is a very unusual day. It seems to me everyone is using some very unparliamentary language. I would ask the member to withdraw that comment.

Mr Runciman: I would ask for an explanation, Mr Speaker. I have no understanding whatsoever of what you are referencing.

The Speaker: You know what unparliamentary—you said.

Mr Runciman: I do not. I didn't say "Pinocchio."

Mr Baird: On a point of order, Mr Speaker—

Mr Runciman: Mr Speaker, if I said something to offend you, I withdraw.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Let's settle down a bit, the member from Nepean-Carleton. Could you proceed in a much more polite way with respect for each other.

Premier.

Hon Mr McGuinty: I recall when the members opposite—then members of the previous government—gave the then Premier Ernie Eves a standing ovation when he broke the taxpayers' protection act of Ontario. They like to forget that, but I remember that.

Let me remind the members opposite and further inform Ontarians about some of the steps we've already taken to bring costs under control:

We've cancelled a corporate tax cut that would have come up to \$2 billion fully annualized, because we couldn't afford it.

We've cancelled the private school tax credit because we believe as a matter of principle that if there is money available, it should go into our public schools, not our private schools.

We are introducing a law, the first of its kind in North America, if not in the world, that will ban the use of taxpayer dollars for partisan political advertising.

We are defending the public purse.

Mr Runciman: We can argue over what the former government did or didn't do, but there's no argument that you are planning to break the law as currently written. What are you going to do? You are going to change the law to allow you to break your commitments to the people of Ontario. This is truly unbelievable and shameful conduct on the part of the Liberal government, a conduct that would make Fidel Castro proud.

Premier, you're showing contempt for the law, contempt for Ontarians who trusted you and gave you their votes, and contempt for your own words about the need to combat cynicism about politics in Ontario. Before it's too late, will you recommit to the pledge signed just eight months ago to abide by the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act. Will you do that?

Hon Mr McGuinty: What the member is really asking me is, are we prepared to support their balanced-budget legislation, which enabled them to hide a \$5.6-billion deficit from the people of Ontario? No, we will not support that law. We will introduce transparency, accountability and openness into the state of the government's finances before the next election.

Mr Runciman: Premier, in last year's Liberal campaign platform, you are quoted as saying, "Nothing inspires me more than the opportunity to combat the cynicism that far too many people feel about Ontario politics." Fine words, but clearly phony words.

What message do you send to young people about the rule of law when you are so casually prepared to break the law, a major promise of your campaign? What message do you send to young people when you betray the trust of Ontarians who wanted to believe in you and gave you their vote? You're betraying your own words and you're betraying the people of Ontario if you move ahead with this plan. Will you reconsider, do the right thing and honour your pledge?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I can assure you we're going to bring transparency, accountability and openness to this government's finances in a way that has never been there before.

I listened with great attentiveness to the members opposite. If only they had been as diligent, as forthright, as open and as accountable as they profess themselves to be now, if only they had brought that kind of approach to the government, then all of us would have known before election day that the true state of the finances was a \$5.6-billion deficit.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Gas prices have rocketed to 85 cents a litre in Toronto and over 88 cents a litre in northern Ontario. Consumers across the province are taking a big hit in the pocketbook, while big oil companies rack up the profits. A year or two ago, Premier, when you were in opposition, your Liberal members all brought forward bills to protect consumers from being gouged at the gasoline pumps. Mr Bartolucci, Mr Bradley, Mr Gravelle, Mr Colle and Mr Crozier all introduced bills to protect consumers from high gas prices. Yet today, when consumers are being gouged, you're all silent. Premier, why are you breaking your many promises to protect consumers at the gas pumps?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): The Minister of Energy.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): We have watched with great concern as gasoline prices have gone up throughout the Western world. I think it's quite appropriate for members of all political parties to express the concerns their constituents have with that issue. We've all watched. In my community yesterday they went up to 89 cents. Across Ontario, across Michigan, across New York, across most of the United States, across western Canada—Montreal hit records yesterday. I think it's appropriate for members to express the frustrations of their constituents. I think it's quite appropriate to do that. We continue to be concerned about it, and we will watch very carefully and listen to the ideas they have for dealing with this issue as it moves forward.

Mr Hampton: Well, Premier, the minister has stated the obvious: Gas prices are going through the roof and people are being screwed. So we have introduced Mr Bartolucci's bill—Mr Bartolucci, the member for Sudbury, who introduced his private member's bill saying that prices should be rolled back to what they were two years ago and then frozen for 90 days. As recently as a year ago, Mr Bartolucci said, "As long as the Harris-Eves" Conservatives "refuse to take on the major oil companies, Ontarians ... will continue to be gouged at the pumps."

Mr Bartolucci is in your cabinet now. Mr Bradley is in your cabinet. Premier, are you saying they didn't mean these things when they said them? Are you saying these promises were empty and idle? Are you admitting that Liberals are breaking another promise to the consumers of Ontario?

Hon Mr Duncan: Colleagues on all sides of the House have quite properly expressed their concern about gasoline prices. We all do.

The member suggests that the government of Ontario can fix it; the government of Ontario cannot.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Duncan: I hear the Tories across the way. The government of Ontario can't fix it. You may think they can.

Let me tell you what the Tory gas-busters said in their report: "Only the federal government has the jurisdiction to address the competition issue by strengthening the provisions of the Competition Act and by ensuring that the Competition Bureau has the resources it needs to enforce those provisions."

The gasoline busters over there pretended they could fix it; they can't. The NDP pretend they can fix it; they can't. There is a serious problem around the world. We're concerned about it, unlike the previous governments, who made 14 commitments and kept only one of them. That's a shameful record. I applaud my colleagues for putting forward the interests of their—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you. New question.

1440

CHILD POVERTY

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Premier. Mr Premier, Campaign 2000 reported yesterday that as a province we have made no progress in ending child poverty. They have also said that the biggest single step you can take as Premier is to end the clawback of the national child tax benefit. That single act alone would put \$1,500 more into the hands of a single parent with one child.

You promised to fight child poverty. This is where I ask you, will you end the clawback or is this just another of one of your empty promises?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): The minister would like to speak to this.

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Yes, we are truly concerned on this side of the House, and I'm sure I speak for all members of the House, about child poverty in this country and in this province. We have made some very good first steps in addressing this.

We increased, for the first time in a decade, money for child care, and many more dollars will come to regulated child care in the months to come. We also increased, for the first time in eight years, the minimum wage, and gave back the social assistance on nutritional supplements for pregnant women, something the former government cut, with some very nasty statements that went along with it.

This is not a simple issue. I know the honourable member knows that. It has to do with working conditions, the economy, child care and education. We're working on all those fronts with all my colleagues to address these issues.

Mr Prue: It is not a simple issue, but neither is poverty. You know full well the circumstances in which these people are living. You know full well that we need 20,000 units of affordable housing that you promised and have done little on. You know full well that we need the child care funding that has been given by the federal government to be distributed now, not later. You know full well that people on social assistance and ODSP need a raise now, and none of those things are happening. Nothing is visibly being done. These promises you made today are promises that are being broken.

My question again: Why would anyone believe you are going to act on child poverty, given the record of your government in the last six months?

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: I'd like to thank the member for the supplementary, and I'd also like to thank Campaign 2000 for their report. Two weeks ago, I met a member of Campaign 2000; he came along with the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care. We will be working together with Campaign 2000, together with the coalition, together with children's aid, together with social assistance and my colleagues to address this very complex issue.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): My question is to the Premier. I want to ask how you, Premier, in good conscience, could tell the people of Ontario that you would balance the books and not raise their taxes when you knew there was a deficit last year due to SARS and 9/11. Your own finance critic, Gerry Phillips, said there might be a deficit due to SARS and 9/11. The Fraser Institute said there would be a deficit. You've already passed the largest tax increase in Ontario's history. I want to know, Premier, based on what you knew at the time you signed the taxpayer protection promise, how could you, in good conscience, sign that promise when you knew you were going to break it?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): Our greatest error in judgment,

and I will admit to this, was having relied on that former government for their information with the respect to the state of the finances.

Mr Wilson: Premier, I want you to look the taxpayers straight in the face. At the time you signed the taxpayer protection promise, you said that you wouldn't raise people's taxes and that you would balance the books of the province. You had all the information you needed to make a good-conscience decision, yet you persisted in your TV ads when you said to people through the TV into their living rooms several times a day that you would not raise people's taxes, but you wouldn't lower them either.

Premier, I can only conclude one thing, and that is that what you said during the election campaign and your signature on the taxpayer protection promise is nothing but a premeditated lie to the people of Ontario. Will you get up and apologize to the people of Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. The member from Simcoe-Grey, would you withdraw that comment you made?

Mr Wilson: Mr Speaker, I don't feel in good conscience I can withdraw that.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'm going to ask the member from Simcoe-Grey to withdraw the comment.

Mr Wilson: Mr Speaker, given the facts today, I can't withdraw that.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I have no alternative but to name the member. Sergeant?

Mr Wilson was escorted from the chamber.

Interjections.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): There are some autistic children out there. Why don't you go and lie to them?

The Speaker: Order. May I ask the member from Nepean-Carleton to withdraw his comment?

Mr Baird: I withdraw.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): Mr Speaker, I am pleased to stand in my place and conduct myself in a parliamentary fashion.

My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. Currently in Ontario there is a patch-work system of licensing electrical contractors. Licensing standards vary greatly from one town or municipality to the next. Some 70 municipalities currently license contractors based on unique local standards, and many do not license contractors at all. As a result, electrical contractors may need multiple business licences to work in some regions. Across the street, there may be no licensing requirements at all.

In my riding of Niagara Falls I have been contacted by many electrical contractors who would like to see some sort of standardization across the province. Last week,

Minister, you introduced legislation to deal with this issue. How will you help streamline and standardize the licensing system for Ontario's thousands of contractors and electricians?

Hon Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): I want to thank the honourable member for Niagara Falls for the question and also for his many representations on behalf of electrical contractors in his community and throughout Ontario.

If passed, Bill 70, which I had the pleasure of introducing last week, would enable our government to establish a modern, consistent and clear legislative framework for electrical safety. The bill proposes the implementation of a province-wide uniform licensing framework in the province of Ontario so that electrical contractors don't have to go from municipality to municipality, getting separate and distinct licenses. I'm pleased to report that these changes, if adopted by this Legislature, have the support of industry, small business, contractors and labour groups. I'm pleased to hear from the president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, who is also supportive of the initiative.

1450

Mr Craitor: Minister, in my riding of Niagara Falls, there are a number of electricians who have worked in the industry for years. These small businesses can ill afford to be bogged down by heavy regulations. Would the proposed provincial licensing framework force small electrical contractors out of business?

Hon Mr Watson: The short answer is no, for the simple reason that I believe, and our government believes, that small contractors in fact would be protected from a province-wide licensing agreement for the simple reason that it would eliminate underground business practices, something I know that my colleague the Minister of Labour has been working diligently on. That is not good for the economy and it's not good for those people who follow the rules of the game.

A uniform provincial licensing system would ensure that we don't have the kind of unqualified contractors who may be giving individual customers a good price, but they are not up to the standards, both from a safety and a consumer point of view. This is an initiative brought forward by the McGuinty government that we believe is going to be well received, not just by the small contractors but all contractors. The labour movement is supportive of it as well. Province-wide licensing would be phased in over five years to give that degree of comfort to those people who perhaps need training to meet the new standards.

LIBERAL CAMPAIGN PROMISES

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): A question to the Premier: I want to talk to you about the value of the word of the Premier of the province of Ontario. Mr Premier, you gave us your word that you would not raise taxes. You are breaking that promise. The Premier vowed to us that he would not raise hydro rates. They're going up by

28%. The Premier looked into the eyes of the parents of autistic children and promised them funding. You've turned your back on them. Just last September, you signed the Taxpayer Protection Act. You signed the contract. You put your name on the dotted line. Today you're ripping it up. Your own signature is worthless. Why should the taxpayers believe anything but that your word, the word of the Premier, is worth dirt?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): I didn't detect a question there, Speaker.

Mr Hudak: Mr Premier, I know you can't answer the question of why anybody should believe a word you say. You have broken scads of promises.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: He's implying that the Premier has lied, which is out of order and it's unparliamentary.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Supplementary.

Mr Hudak: Mr Premier, I can't believe you can't answer the question. The simple question is: Why should we believe a word that you say? You have broken scads of promises. Sadly, people have come to think that Dalton McGuinty breaks his promises. They've come to expect that. McGuinty and promise-breaking is almost—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'd like to hear the member from Erie-Lincoln's supplementary.

Mr Hudak: Sadly, people have come to expect Dalton McGuinty to break his promises. It's almost synonymous. It's absolutely embarrassing. Today, Mr Premier, is the big one, the mother of all broken promises: ripping up the Taxpayer Protection Act to allow multi-year deficits and mega tax hikes. You promised to bring integrity to government. You've given cynicism and promise-breaking free rein. You said you've been a boy scout, but you've done nothing but break your word.

Hon Mr McGuinty: Apparently, the member opposite is a champion of integrity and doing everything that would instil confidence in the political process and our system of government, so I will leave him with this particular query, then: There's balanced budget legislation that specifically requires that the budget be balanced, failing which the cabinet responsible for that budget should forfeit a portion of its salary. So I say to the member opposite, given that he saddled the people of Ontario with a \$5.6-billion deficit, will he do the honourable thing and send over a portion of his salary?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I hope the Parliament would be an example of where we can conduct some business. It doesn't seem to be that way today. If there are any more outbursts like that, we may have to take some other actions. We cannot proceed with question period with this shouting. I say too that members who have great experience in this place and know much better than that should set an example. Could we proceed with questions.

NURSES

Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): My question is for the Minister of Health. As the minister knows, our province's nurses are one of the most important contributors to Ontario's health care system. Despite their incredible contributions, cuts made by the previous government have led to tremendous hardship for them. I've heard first hand from nurses in my riding that a lack of full-time positions has created a poor quality of working life and often forced them to take on a horrendous shift schedule, sometimes at different hospitals and health facilities.

During the election, we promised that we would create more full-time positions and better working conditions for nurses in hospitals across this province. In light of these promises, can the minister tell us what we have done so far to relieve some of the pressure that nurses in hospitals have been facing because of the cuts made by the previous government?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I think all members in the House would agree with the idea that nurses are the heart and soul of health care. We said very clearly that we, as a government, have a responsibility to rebuild the foundations of nursing, and I'm pleased to say that we've made important down payments on that.

In February, when we announced \$385-million in new funding for hospitals, we targeted \$25 million of that toward nursing: 400 new full-time nursing positions created in February. Last week, we announced a further \$25 million for the smallest hospitals in Ontario; a further 400 nurses have been hired.

Further, I'm working with my colleague the Minister of Labour to enhance workplace health and safety conditions. We put more money into equipment to deal with some of the workplace health and safety challenges our nurses are facing.

On the issue of full-time nurses, I'm pleased to say that Ontario's hospitals are working harder at this than they ever have. Last week, Hamilton Health Sciences Centre, one of the largest hospitals in our province, announced an end to the hiring of agency nurses. This is good news. It means more full-time nursing positions in Ontario.

Mr Milloy: I'm pleased that we're making progress on this file. Nevertheless, I'm concerned that the current financial situation plaguing the province may hamper further progress in this area. Can the minister tell the Legislature what assurances he's prepared to give nurses regarding our government's future commitment to the profession?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I send the message, not only to nurses but to Ontarians, that our commitment to hire more nurses in Ontario is essential to delivering on the promise of enhanced quality of health care in this province. Our government is committed to restoring the quality of public services in health care and education, and with respect to nursing.

Through the course of this year and the balance of our mandate, each and every year will be marked by continuous improvement on the file, as measured by the percentage of nurses who are working full-time and the number of nurses who are on the ward floors across this province, providing the care at the bedside that is so essential to enhanced quality of care. We've made early progress in our commitment to hire 8,000 more nurses in this province—800 are already funded and are beginning to be in place in our hospitals. We have more work to do. I look forward to future opportunities, coming very soon, to demonstrate the next steps of progress toward that goal.

1500

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Premier, you promised Ontario drivers a 10% to 20% reduction in their car insurance rates, but it's not happening. Your excuse is that you have regulated a so-called 10% rate reduction by insurance companies, but people won't see it until maybe the end of the year or next year. Now it turns out that that's not true either. State Farm Insurance, the third-largest car insurer in Ontario, has admitted today that they won't be reducing their rates by 10%. They won't be reducing them by 5%. They admit that your government has said it's OK for them to—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Question?

Mr Hampton: —a 4.5% reduction. What's your excuse to the hundreds of thousands of drivers who are insured with State Farm who believed your promise of a 10% or 20% reduction and now find out it's only 4.5%?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): Minister of Finance.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I appreciate the question from my friend from Kenora-Rainy River and that he gave us notice of the question. I'm surprised he didn't take the opportunity to apologize for putting a question forward yesterday based on information that he knew was wrong. But we'll leave that for another day.

Mr Hampton: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: There was nothing in that question yesterday that was false.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. That's not a point of order.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): Point of order—a separate point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker: That's not a point of order.

Mr Baird: It's a different point of order. The Minister of Finance, in response to the member for Kenora-Rainy River, said the member for Kenora-Rainy River put forward information which he knew was false. That is clearly unparliamentary. I would ask that you address that.

The Speaker: That is not a point of order. Minister of Finance.

Hon Gregory Sorbara: We're dealing today with the issue of State Farm. Let's look at what happened with this company over the course of the past four years. In 2001, they were given a rate increase of 5.1%; in 2002, under the Conservative government, they were given a rate increase—hold your breath, sir—of 24.8%, and in 2003, a rate increase of 7.5%. For the first time in four years, their rates will go down. On average rates will go down in this province by 10%.

Mr Hampton: Talk about people who are giving out false information. I heard the Premier say that people would get at least a 10% to 20% rate reduction. All the people of Ontario heard that. Now we find out that State Farm, the third-largest auto insurance company in Ontario, which insures hundreds of thousands of people, is not going to give a 20% rate reduction. They're not going to give a 10% rate reduction. Your government has approved them for only a 4.5% rate reduction. I ask the Premier: What are you going to do about your false information? You promised a 10% or 20% reduction. Hundreds of thousands of drivers across this province aren't going to get it. What are you going to do about the false information you've been putting out?

Hon Mr Sorbara: Already, hundreds of thousands of drivers, including William—

Interjection: Name one.

Hon Mr Sorbara: You said, "Name one"? What about William Botting of Burlington. Last year, he paid \$910 for his automobile insurance. This year—he has just recently renewed—as a result of our reforms, he is now paying \$818, about 10% less. I want to tell my friend from Kenora-Rainy River that when he has the courage to correct the information that he brought to this House yesterday, his questions may be taken somewhat more seriously.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): I have a copy of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation magazine with your picture on the cover, and the article inside says: "McGuinty seems to understand. In order to be elected in Ontario, a political leader must make respecting taxpayers and balancing the budget the top priority."

There's a lead editorial quote from the *Globe and Mail* published here. It says: "The Liberal leader put his fiscal conservatism in writing ... scrawled his name under the [Taxpayer Protection Promise] ... In that one act, he confronted Ontarians' greatest concern about Ontario Liberal governments—the fear of fiscal bungling."

Premier, how can you break your promise to the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, and how can you break your promise to the people of the province of Ontario?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): Again, there's an important issue that weighs heavily on the minds of those people who are observing these kinds of things these days, which is this: Given that the previous government broke the law and failed to balance the budget, given that there

was in fact a \$5.6-billion deficit, and given that the same law says that as a minister of the cabinet you've got to forgo 25% of your income, the question I have for my friend is, is he prepared to give up that 25% of his income, given that he broke the law?

Mr Baird: I have news for you: You won the election. And I have another piece of news for you: There was a projected deficit when you entered office, and you increased spending by \$3 billion, you increased taxes by \$800 million and you got an extra \$2 billion in revenue you didn't expect. You, sir, could have governed Ontario with a budget surplus.

I want to call your attention to your campaign platform. You said, "As we enter the next provincial election, I will have three children in university and a fourth completing high school. I find it unacceptable that their generation may be so turned off by our political system that they will virtually abandon representative democracy." Will you not admit that you're now the poster child for political cynicism in Canada?

Hon Mr McGuinty: Let me take this opportunity to talk about what is so important to people on this side of the House and my colleagues sitting over on that side as well.

We are determined to improve the quality of public service for all Ontarians. We will, to the very best of our ability, in each and every instance, put the public interest ahead of personal interest, and our most important priorities remain health care and education. I'm talking about more nurses, more doctors and shorter waiting times. I'm talking about smaller classes, lead teachers and celebrating excellence when it comes to teaching in Ontario. Those things are important to us.

ASSISTANCE TO DISABLED

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. I watched with excitement your announcement a few days ago that provides greater opportunity for people with disabilities. The Prime Minister said that the agreement reached between the federal and provincial governments would remove barriers and foster opportunities. You said that the agreement takes us one step closer to our goal of full inclusion of Ontarians with disabilities. The agreement deals with areas of access such as skills development, employers' readiness and various work supports. When will my constituents with disabilities be able to access that much-needed assistance?

Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): That question from the member from London-Fanshawe is much appreciated. Many people in the London area will be able to see the benefits of an accord between the Ontario government and the federal government—a happy accord for a change.

I can't tell you how proud I was to be there with our Premier and the Prime Minister of Canada signing, which means additional millions of dollars, which this govern-

ment will match, for the use of employment supports for the disabled community here in Ontario: 18 programs across the province will stand to benefit from the additional funding.

If I may say, the flexibility of this new agreement really is a landmark, and we're very pleased to have been participating in such a plan.

1510

Mr Ramal: Minister, many employers know that people with disabilities are talented and enthusiastic and helpful team players. The problem for many businesses has been the cost that sometimes is incurred when hiring a disabled person. What assistance to small business will be available to them to help fulfill the promises of greater inclusion and expand opportunity for disabled persons?

Hon Ms Pupatello: I appreciate this supplementary question, as this member, a businessman himself, knows full well that in involving the private sector in government programs, it's essential to have a program agreement that is flexible enough to work with the private sector. The difference between this new agreement and the old allows us to include such things as wage subsidies to encourage the private sector to participate and seriously look at hiring people with disabilities—something they may not be in a position to do without this little bit of help from the program. We're very pleased to see that.

And we were very happy indeed to be at Famous Players for our signing—a company renowned in the community to be really world-class in taking individuals, hiring them and promoting them. So our hats go off to this company as well.

HEALTH CARE

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Despite the allegations from the member for Kitchener Centre, I would just say that our government invested almost \$400 million into nursing and created 12,000 new positions. I want to set the record straight.

Mr Minister, in a *Globe and Mail* article, you were quoted as saying in reference to Bill 8, "Accountability is a two-way street." Everyone agrees—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Would you allow the member from Kitchener-Waterloo to ask her question? Thank you.

Mrs Witmer: Minister, in a *Globe and Mail* article, in reference to Bill 8, you were quoted as saying, "Accountability is a two-way street." As you know, everyone does agree, but those people who are making presentations on the bill also agree that the bill as it is presently written does not ensure two-way accountability. It doesn't hold the government accountable.

I'd like to quote from Doris Grinspun's presentation, the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario, who said, "It would appear that accountability is a one-way street: from provider organizations to government, with no accountability envisioned from government to providers

and the public." I simply ask you, Minister, are you prepared to make amendments that would address the concerns of the nurses, as well as others, that would guarantee two-way accountability on the part of the government in Bill 8?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Thank you very much. I might have thought that the member opposite would want to be fair and to offer comment including from Miss Flood, who said that she felt the accountability measures were headed in the right direction, or a quote from Roy Romanow: "Ontario's Bill 8 has some very important features that reinforce what we had in mind regarding accountability. It seems to me that Ontario wants to do the real work required to ensure medicare sustainability. And Premier McGuinty has played a key role in breaking the log jam that led to the creation of the Health Council of Canada."

The member well knows that my point of view on this is that we suffer from no shortage of accountability and that, in particular, the Ontario Health Quality Council will be an important tool in that regard.

I would just say that on a day when you're asking me a question like this, the member from Nepean-Carleton, on behalf of your party, suggested that we should have used all the federal health dollars to balance the budget instead of using those health dollars for what they were intended, which was to improve the quality of health care in the province of Ontario.

Mrs Witmer: I would share with the minister the fact that Roy Romanow also has indicated that you need to provide adequate, stable and predictable funding for our health care system. Regrettably, Bill 8 does not do that, nor does it improve accessibility to health care.

I ask you, are you prepared to make amendments such as those requested by the Ontario Hospital Association which would ensure the right to timely access to health care? Would you also acknowledge what the OMA, the Ontario Medical Association, has said: "This bill has nothing to do with improving accessibility since it ignores the real problems in the system: chronic under-funding and a lack of resources"?

Will you do what Roy Romanow says you should do: provide stable, adequate, predictable funding? That's the way we can improve accessibility.

Hon Mr Smitherman: I find it interesting that the member is referencing Roy Romanow without offering a direct quote and contradicting the member for Nepean-Carleton, who earlier today said that those new federal health dollars coming to Ontario for the purposes of enhancing the quality of health care should, instead, be spent diminishing it, and at the same time that she's calling for more and stable funding, this member is suggesting that the spending isn't necessary in health care.

With respect to the predictability of funding, our party in government is committed to following through on something that other parties have long promised and never delivered upon: offering to our partners, like hospitals, predictable and stable funding into the future

so that they can plan appropriately. That is the most important advance, and we're bringing it forward.

PARK INFESTATION

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. I've been hearing from constituents on a regular basis about their concerns regarding the devastation caused by the huge cormorant population in Presqu'ile park. You recently posted on the Environmental Bill of Rights a proposal to cull cormorants as a means of controlling their population in the park. Have you made a decision whether you'll proceed with this much-needed strategy to ensure that the environment within our park is protected?

Hon David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources): I share the concerns raised by the member for Prince Edward-Hastings. Therefore, we will be proceeding with a limited cull this year in Presqu'ile Provincial Park. The Minister of the Environment has denied the request for an individual environmental assessment, as scientific evidence has proven that a prompt decision was necessary.

This action is being done to protect Presqu'ile Provincial Park. As a result of cormorant nesting and their waste, large numbers of these birds are destroying the park's inland wooded areas, and this is basically destroying the habitat of other water birds such as herons and egrets.

Mr Parsons: That's great news, except, I suppose, if you're a cormorant. I'm certain many of the residents in my community in eastern Ontario will be very pleased with your decision.

I would like to ask, however, whether you expect this to be an annual part of your cormorant management strategy.

Hon Mr Ramsay: I would say to the member that we are taking this very serious step because under the previous program we were not able to control this population.

We will continue, though, the more benign efforts of egg oiling and nest disturbance in order to try to manage this population. Part of what the Minister of the Environment has requested is that we have a scientific panel examine the results of this year's cull before we proceed with any future cull.

FINANCEMENT DE L'ÉDUCATION EN FRANÇAIS

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-Baie James): Ma question est au premier ministre. Vous savez qu'il existe déjà une grosse iniquité, entre les conseils francophones et anglophones dans cette province, envers le financement. Vous savez, par exemple, que cette iniquité ajoute beaucoup aux problèmes ayant affaire, par exemple, aux salaires des professeurs francophones, qui sont au moins 5 000 \$ de moins. Quand ça vient à la programmation pour l'adaptation à la langue, il y a beaucoup moins d'argent dans les conseils francophones comparé aux

conseils anglophones. On sait que la programmation offerte aux jeunes d'un conseil anglophone est beaucoup plus haute et élevée dans les grades secondaires comparée à celle de leurs collègues dans le système franco-phone. Ma question est simplement celle-ci : vous avez promis que vous alliez adresser cette question quand vous formeriez le gouvernement. Est-ce que vous êtes préparé à verser les 100 \$ millions nécessaires pour corriger cette lacune dans votre budget le 18 mai?

L'hon. Dalton McGuinty (premier ministre, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales): Je sais très bien que M^{me} la ministre veut répondre à cette question.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur (ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones): Je crois que la réponse viendrait du ministre de l'Éducation.

1520

L'hon. Gerard Kennedy (ministre de l'Éducation): J'aimerais vous remercier pour cette question. Il est très important de—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I think they can do that, to get a right answer. The Minister of Education. Order. We have two ministers who are prepared to give you the answer. That's a bonus. Is the minister of francophone affairs prepared to respond? Thank you.

L'hon. M^{me} Meilleur: Monsieur le Président, comme vous le savez, lors du discours du trône, le premier ministre a annoncé qu'il y a un groupe de travail qui a été nommé pour revoir le problème en éducation et le financement des écoles françaises. Alors, lorsqu'on aura le rapport, je suis persuadée que le ministre de l'Éducation va bien prendre connaissance du rapport et agir en conséquence.

M. Bisson: C'est une journée très triste pour la communauté francophone quand un gouvernement ne peut pas répondre à une simple question de la part de la communauté francophone par notre ministre qui est déléguée au cabinet afin d'œuvrer pour la communauté francophone. Ce n'est pas une bonne journée.

La question qu'on vous a demandée est très simple. Vous avez fait une promesse à la communauté francophone. Est-ce qu'on peut s'attendre à ce que les 100 \$ millions que vous avez promis vont être dans le budget le 18 mai, oui ou non ?

L'hon. M^{me} Meilleur: Je remercie mon collègue pour cette question et pour son intérêt envers les francophones de l'Ontario. On devra attendre le 18 mai pour voir ce qui sera dans le budget concernant l'éducation en français. Je lui rappelle qu'il y a un groupe d'étude qui est à revoir le problème de financement des écoles françaises. Alors, lorsqu'on recevra le rapport, le ministre de l'Éducation va agir en conséquence.

AMBULANCE SERVICES

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): A question to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, a follow-up to his answer yesterday to the member from Niagara Centre.

Mr Minister, you said the ambulance dispatch issue in Niagara was all about 30 days. In fact, that's not true. During the campaign, the Liberals said it would be transferred to Niagara immediately. We have now had three consecutive delays, a veritable hat trick of broken promises that would make Dalton McGuinty blush. Yesterday, in an answer full of machismo, you said you were going to walk the walk. Well, let's put it to the test and see if you walk the walk. If you don't hit the May 30 deadline, your third deadline, will you step down?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The fact of the matter is that when we were in the middle of an election campaign, your party, which was then the government, had done an awful lot of work to disguise the reality of a \$5.6-billion deficit and a further \$2.2 billion worth of pressures.

With that reality in mind, this party in government is going to make the achievement of delivering on that promise, which requires our finding many tens of millions of dollars of new money. I can assure you that that task has been made more difficult by the fact that that party, while in government, disguised the realities of the fiscal situation in Ontario.

To the people of Niagara, and with those members of our party from Niagara in mind who are in government, we will deliver on this promise.

PETITIONS

HIGHWAY 407

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. This was given to me by Mr Werry yesterday. There are quite a number here.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the timely and efficient movement of people and products are crucial 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 networks and by improving public transportation;

"Whereas the construction of Highway 407 eastward into the Durham region, across Clarington to Highways 35/115, 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 to this matter;

"Whereas CAAC (Clarington agricultural advisory committee) has expressed concerns and advocates for final construction completion of Highway 407 through Clarington connecting 35/115;

"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 Highway 35/115, while ensuring that all the necessary environmental assessment and public consultations are followed."

The Minister of Transportation, Mr Takhar, is here. I sign this as my support of this petition here today.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"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 Dalton McGuinty government and the current Minister of Finance will be presenting the 2004 budget inside the Legislature on May 18, 2004;

"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 have signed this petition, as I agree with it.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to present a petition from seniors in Wellandport, Ontario, like Phyllis Reece and the Hawke family. 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, my signature.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Ms Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): I am pleased to present a petition signed by over 1,000 people from my riding of London North Centre.

“Whereas:

“(a) the Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB) has launched an accommodation study involving the possible closure of London’s Northdale Public School in the Northridge subdivision upon the building of a new elementary school in the Stoney Creek subdivision;

“(b) the TVDSB’s decision to close Northdale is based on cost effectiveness;

“(c) the Premier of Ontario, Dalton McGuinty, stated if school boards close ... under his watch, he wants the decision to be based on quality of education, not economics” according to the “London Free Press ...;”

“(d) the McGuinty government has put a moratorium on school closings until a fair funding formula is in place;

“(e) the quality of education at London’s Northdale Public School far exceeds the provincial standards (grade 3s ranked at number two in the entire” school board);

“We, the undersigned, recognize the exceptional quality of education London’s Northdale Public School provides and the significant value it has to the community, and hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the TVDSB to explore all options to keep Northdale Public School open.”

I’m happy to add my name to this petition.

1530

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): This is a petition from the good people of Cambridge.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas we are in disagreement with the tax burden put on trailer owners in seasonal parks;

“Whereas an unfair situation has arisen under the Assessment Act;

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

“Please support extending regulation 390/03 so that it covers and protects me from taxation;

“Please support extending regulation 390/03 so that it covers and protects me from retroactive taxation.”

I set my hand hereto.

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL PARKWAY

Mr Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): I’m pleased to submit this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on behalf of my constituents from Niagara Falls.

“Whereas Alexander Graham Bell, renowned inventor of society-altering technological inventions, such as the telephone, greatly revolutionized the daily lives of people in Ontario, Canada and the world; and

“Whereas Alexander Graham Bell’s contribution to science, technology and society as a whole were in part developed and tested while he lived in Brantford, Ontario; and

“Whereas Brantford lies at the heart of the section of Highway 403 which runs from Woodstock to Burlington;

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

“To adopt and pass into law Dave Levac’s private member’s bill, Bill 44, the Alexander Graham Bell Parkway Act, renaming Highway 403 between Woodstock and Burlington as a tribute to this great inventor.”

I’m pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I have a petition entitled “Stop Taxes from Driving Away Trailer Tourism.”

“Whereas the Municipal Property Assessment Corp ... has begun inspecting all campgrounds in the province of Ontario and issuing retroactive assessment for recreational trailers; and

“Whereas, despite the fact the assessments are based on the permanence of individual trailer structures, taxes for individual trailer assessments are required to be paid by the campground owners, to be recouped from the actual trailer owners at a later date; and

“Whereas campground owners are not tax collectors and have no means to force trailer tenants to reimburse campgrounds for taxes paid on individual trailers; and

“Whereas campground owners will be forced to pass along any assessment costs that are not reimbursed to tenants through increased fees, with the potential to drive trailer tenants away and impact adversely on tourism in Ontario; and

“Whereas trailer owners do not receive regular garbage pickup and other services that property taxpayers expect in return for their payment; and

“Whereas government has failed to make clear the determining factors for assessment regarding the permanence of trailer structures;

“We, the undersigned, request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to review the current trailer assessment process, eliminate retroactive assessments, communicate with campground owners to clarify assessment requirements and determine a fair structure for collection from individual tenants.”

I affix my signature.

TENANT PROTECTION

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): The member for Danforth.

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I think it’s Davenport, but it’s close enough.

The Deputy Speaker: Davenport. I owed you that from yesterday, you will recall.

Mr Ruprecht: I have a petition, signed by a few hundred tenants of some of the apartment buildings in Toronto, which reads as follows:

“Whereas the so-called ‘Tenant Protection Act’ of the defeated Harris-Eves Tories has allowed landlords to

increase rents well above the rate of inflation for new and old tenants alike;

“Whereas the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal created by this act regularly awards major and permanent additional rent increases to landlords to pay for required one-time improvements and temporary increases in utility costs;

“Whereas the same act has given landlords wide-ranging powers to evict tenants;

“Whereas before last October’s election Premier McGuinty promised ‘real protection for tenants at all times’;

“Whereas our own MPP, Liberal Tony Ruprecht, called for a rent rollback ... at a public event in June 2003;

“We, the undersigned, residents of Doversquare Apartments in Toronto, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

“To immediately scrap all Tory guideline and above-guideline increases for 2004, as an elementary gesture of goodwill towards tenants, who voted massively against the Tories in last October’s election.

“To shut down the notoriously pro-landlord Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal.

“To abrogate the Tory ‘Tenant Protection Act’ and to draw up new landlord-tenant legislation in consultation with tenants and housing rights campaigners.”

I sign my name to this petition, Mr Speaker.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

“Whereas prescription drugs are not covered under the Canada Health Act unless dispensed in a hospital; and

“Whereas the federal Liberal government refuses to acknowledge this as a necessary health service despite the Romanow report’s strong support for a national drug program;

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

“To immediately and unequivocally commit to end plans for the delisting of drugs for coverage under the Ontario drug benefit program;

“To immediately commit to ending plans to implement higher user fees for seniors and to improve the Ontario drug benefit plan so they can obtain necessary medications; and

“To instruct Premier McGuinty to demand more health care funding from Ottawa instead of demanding more funding from seniors.”

This has my signature of support.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Tim Peterson (Mississauga South): I have a petition from over 2,000 members in Mississauga South that reads as follows:

“Whereas the Ministry of Education currently funds secondary students for 7.5 credits per year, which does not meet the needs of students and limits their ability to obtain a comprehensive and holistic education; and

“Whereas Mordechai Rozanski, in his report Investing in Public Education recommended ‘the Ministry of Education adjust the credit load factor in the funding formula’; and

“Whereas the Liberal Party of Ontario promised that, if elected, they would implement all of the Rozanski report;

“We, the undersigned, request by petition that the Parliament of Ontario fund school boards for the actual number of classes in which students are enrolled, starting in the school year 2004-05 and continuing on thereafter.”

I am pleased to table this petition.

LANDFILL

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

“Whereas the county of Simcoe has received, over a period of time, the necessary approvals from the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at site 41; and

“Whereas, as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations for improvements to the design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

“Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

“Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on water source protection, which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented under Justice Dennis O’Connor’s report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

“Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the minister on water source protection legislation; and

“Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

“Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide public hearings on water source protection legislation;

“We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario. We believe the legislation will

definitely affect the design of site 41 and the nearby water sources.”

I'm proud to sign my name as well.

PENSION PLANS

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Stelpipe Ltd and Welland Pipe Ltd are currently operating under the protection of the Companies’ Creditors Arrangement Act (CCAA), as part of the restructuring process being undertaken by Stelco Inc; and

“Whereas the pension benefits guarantee fund does not protect the entire amount of accrued pension benefits....”

The signers call upon the government to protect their pensions.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have one more petition here, which is very important and which is addressed to the Parliament of Ontario, the Premier of Ontario and the Minister of Finance. It reads as follows:

“We, the undersigned property owners and tenants, strongly oppose the current value assessment system in Ontario. The 2003 current value assessment system is too high and we will show strong resistance. There may be a tax revolt.

“We believe the municipal tax system should reflect the following principles: (1) Ability to pay should be a consideration; (2) property taxes should be related to services 100%; (3) homeowners should not be penalized for improving their properties; (4) dependence on the residential property tax to raise provincial and municipal revenues should be reduced; (5) the assessment system should be stable over a long period of time—10 years; (6) assessments should be objective, accurate, consistent, correct, equitable and easily understood—house sf class price; lot sf class price, garage sf class price; and (7) the owner should be authorized to approve the assessment.”

Most of our funding has come from ratepayers groups and citizens across Ontario. I sign my name to this petition.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): The time for petitions has expired.

1540

OPPOSITION DAY

USER FEES

FRAIS D’UTILISATEUR

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly call upon the government,

To recognize that the Premier ruled out raising taxes over the course of the last election—just six short months ago by saying the following: “We will not raise taxes one cent on Ontario families,”

To recognize that Liberal caucus members—

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): That's not a petition, Speaker.

Mr Baird: I'm reading an opposition day motion.

Mr Patten: I'm sorry; excuse me.

Mr Baird: You're excused. A veteran member like yourself, I'm shocked. I apologize.

To recognize that the Liberal caucus members over the last several years have consistently stood in opposition to user fees, and have publicly labelled user fees as “tax increases,”

And to recognize that the Premier has publicly insisted that user fees were recommended to him in his pre-budget hearings, but is unable to give the name of one, single person who actually asked for new user fees,

That the Legislative Assembly calls upon the McGuinty government to live by the promises made during the most important public consultation session—namely, the last election, and rule out any and all new and increased user fees in advance of the May 18 budget.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Mr Baird has moved opposition day number one. Mr Baird.

Mr Baird: It's certainly my pleasure to speak to this important resolution. This is a bigger issue than just taxes, than just borrowing against the public purse, than spending on important priorities and services for the people of Ontario. It's about the integrity of our electoral and democratic process. We have a democratic deficit in this country because some politicians will say anything to get elected. Some politicians will say one thing before the election and do another after the election. I will name 71 names of folks who did that in Ontario. And we wonder why there's cynicism among young people in politics today. It's because politicians, from coast to coast, around the world, lie to voters at election time.

The Deputy Speaker: Let's just start off on a good note. I frankly think that there's another way to express some of our views without using that word in the Legislature. I just wish the member would try to do that.

Mr Baird: People feel used, that people come to their door and promise them things to get their vote, and then after the election, change their mind.

I want to give a specific example. There were some parents of autistic children who visited this Legislature and who were disappointed that the previous government cut off children from receiving services when they went to school. They disagreed with that policy. Dalton McGuinty promised that, if elected, he would extend that full coverage for autistic children beyond the age of six. These parents were thrilled. They got out, they hustled for the Liberal Party, they voted Liberal across the province of Ontario—as the member for Nickel Belt can tell you. They supported the Liberal Party, and boy, are they angry. They feel that they were led down the garden path. They feel abused. One of the parents who's in fact

suing the government said, "At least you guys were honest. At least you guys gave us one story before the election, and it was the same story after the election." This resolution is incredibly important because it seeks to hold the government of the day accountable.

I want to read the taxpayer protection promise: "I, Dalton McGuinty, leader of the Liberal party of Ontario, promise, if my party is elected as the next government, I will not raise taxes or implement any new taxes without the explicit consent of Ontario voters and not run deficits. I promise to abide by the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act."

Dalton McGuinty's signature is right on this document. No one put a gun to his head. No one forced him to do it, but he chose to make a solemn pledge to the province of Ontario. As I pointed out in question period, from a *Globe and Mail* editorial, this was the answer to the concerns that many taxpayers had that Liberals were wasteful and wild spenders, that they would run big deficits and that they would bring in big tax increases. They voted for them because they had some confidence that the Liberals would keep their word. Dalton McGuinty has broken faith with the people of the province of Ontario. He has not lived up to his campaign commitments. He has not lived up to his campaign commitments. He has not lived up to his campaign pledges. He has broken faith with working families in the province of Ontario.

I want to speak to the issue of the finances for the year, 2003-04. Yesterday, in the *Ottawa Citizen*, I wrote an op-ed piece. People say, "Was there a deficit last year, in last year's October election?" There was only six months of the fiscal year, so obviously there couldn't be a deficit because there were still six months—half of the year—left, but there is no doubt the province's finances were facing some big fiscal challenges. We had SARS, we had mad cow, we had the electricity blackout, that all took place after the budget, after the budget was presented. The members would have wanted to see how we would have balanced the budget. I'll tell them. First—

Interjection.

Mr Baird: I say to the member opposite, listen and I'll tell you. First, the Liberals did pocket \$1 billion from the federal government for health and SARS funding. We had \$771 million we had budgeted for as revenue, and then increased health care spending before we got the money, counting on Jean Chrétien to keep his word. To be fair, Jean Chrétien did keep his word. They got \$330 million for SARS that simply reimbursed the province for costs that they had already spent. So the revenue came—a billion dollars more for health.

Second, the Liberals have increased spending by \$3 billion since they got elected. Now, if you were afraid of having a deficit, the last thing you'd want to do is spend more money, but they did. Plus, they raised taxes. In the first three months alone they raised taxes by \$800 million. That's a lot of zeros. They could have applied that towards balancing the budget. They Liberals also had a \$2-billion contingency fund that was certified and was

verified to bring in a balanced budget in Ontario. They could have had a billion-dollar surplus, had they wanted to, but they didn't want to because they're playing games with the Ontario economy. I'll tell you, 25,000 people felt the wrath of this economic policy when they lost their jobs in March.

Interjections.

Mr Baird: I know that people think that this is a joke when people lose their jobs, and they want to hector and lecture these unemployed people, but they'd better not, because they're playing games with the fiscal reality of the province of Ontario. I've already explained how they could have balanced the budget if had they wanted to, but they are more committed with politically vilifying the former government than accepting their responsibility. That is a disgrace. They seek to change the subject.

They won the election. The Liberals won the election. Now they have to take responsibility for the promises that they made, but this is the way we were warned it would be, that a big-spending, wasteful Liberal government—first they tax and then they spend. A \$4.2-billion tax hike is more than Bob Rae spent. This government, these MPPs all campaigned like Mike Harris and now they're governing like Bob Rae. It's an absolute outrage to the hard-working people of the province of Ontario who expected more.

When politicians go door to door, they make promises. When I was Minister of Energy, we brought in laws for door-to-door hucksters who lie to people at the door, and we'd put them in jail if they'd repeat and do that.

Interjections.

1550

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Let's calm it down again. I asked the member about using that word, and I really would appreciate it if he would choose his words—you know, temperate language is the hallmark of good debate.

Mr Baird: Well, the hallmark of good government is people who keep their word. It's people who act honestly, who do what they said they would do, people who are honest, people who do not deceive, who do not scam, who do not con, who do not swindle, who do not hoax, and who do not cheat. That is the hallmark of honest debate. That's the hallmark of our parliamentary democracy. That's the hallmark that Dalton McGuinty said he would bring to government, and I'm not sure voters agree with that. I want to say that Conservatives and the Canadian Taxpayers Federation will not let you get away with that.

If I could call a page to deliver this, I'm going to send over to my friend the deputy government House leader—Liberals have no excuse to run a deficit—a copy of an op-ed piece that I wrote that will explain how he could have done it. I know he'll want to read that before he writes—

Interjection.

Mr Baird: It's not a matter of paying back a cheque. These Liberal cabinet ministers are breaking the law. They're committing an offence, and they're going to be

fined accordingly, like other people when they contravene the law. They're doing it in a premeditated way. They know they're going to break the law, and they're ploughing ahead to break the law. They're announcing that they are going to break the law. I think that for lawmakers to knowingly, in a premeditated fashion, break the law is simply outrageous.

I say to the member opposite, we're going to hold this group of people accountable. Taxpayers in Ontario will not forget. They will not forget the broken promises.

Frankly, what I think we need is legislation. We regulate door-to-door salespeople who retail natural gas and electricity to ensure that there are honest practices, to ensure that people aren't scammed, that people aren't conned, that they're not swindled, that they are not hoaxed or deceived. Perhaps that should be legislation with respect to all door-to-door activities, including those activities which happen in the course of a 28- or 29-day election campaign.

So this important resolution is going to be debated, and the seniors of Don Valley East are going to want to know whether their member supports user fees. They're going to want to know whether their member believes an increase in user fees is a new tax. They're going to want to know whether their vote on October 2 meant anything. They're going to have a chance to find out at 6 o'clock tonight, when their member will have a chance to vote.

I see my friend Gilles Bisson from the NDP is here. I disagree with the NDP. I think their approach is wrong and I think it has serious consequences. But at least he's honest. At least he doesn't say one thing before the election and do another thing after. We can have a debate with New Democrats, and it's an honest one.

Interjection.

Mr Baird: I can tell you, people in Ancaster, in Flamborough, in Aldershot and in Dundas want a member to stand up against increased taxes. If they don't get it from this member, they're going to get it after the next election campaign.

I'm going to tell you that since the Weimar Republic there hasn't been a single Liberal government that has been re-elected. We know why Liberal governments aren't re-elected: because they break their promises, they raise taxes, they increase spending, and the people of Ontario will not forget. Members like Toby Barrett, Garfield Dunlop and Norm Miller are going to ensure that these promise-breakers are held to account. We look forward to hearing other members stand in their place and represent their hard-working constituents to ensure that we get some honesty and integrity back in this place.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I was just speaking to a page who happens to be from the great riding of Eglinton-Lawrence, Natasha Persaud. It's an amazing history of the Persaud family. She's the third member of her family to be a page in this House. It's quite an accomplishment.

The Persauds, like a lot of people in Ontario, live by very modest means. They have an apartment just off Castlefield Avenue and Dufferin. They dedicate their

lives, like most Ontarians, to their children. They work hard, they save their nickels and dimes—and yes, nickels and dimes and toonies mean a lot to people—and they put that money aside so that they can take care of their children's education. It means a lot to the Persauds, it means a lot to ordinary Ontarians to also make sure they have that money aside so they can have good health care for their children, so that one day their children will be able to have good housing. So they want government to be like them. They want government to put money aside for basic essential services—not for hair-brained schemes like buying forests in Costa Rica like the NDP did. They want the government of Ontario to invest money in health care and education.

During the last election, when we went door to door, that's exactly what they said door to door. They said, "Listen, we don't want those hokey tax cut promises. We don't want those hokey NDP schemes. Just tell us you're going to put money into our schools, put the money into fixing our health care, and make sure our streets are well taken care of and our city's transit system works." That's all they asked. They said, "Those tax cut schemes of the last eight years have brought ruin to our community. They've brought ruin to the province of Ontario." They said, "Stop with those tax cut schemes."

That's what we've done. In fact, in one of the first bills we put through this House, Bill 2, which the NDP voted against, we said, "No money for private schools." The NDP said yes to private school money, and the Tories said yes to private school money. We also said no to further reckless corporate tax cuts. The NDP said yes to that again, sided with the Conservatives and said, "It's OK to give more corporate tax cuts."

We on this side and Premier McGuinty said, "We cannot afford more corporate tax cuts. We can't afford to fund private schools. We need the money for the basics Ontarians are depending upon." That's what the last election was about, and this motion today is all about misdirection, it's all about camouflage, it's all about changing the subject, because they don't want the people of Ontario to recall the havoc brought upon them by the previous government. They don't want to recall the most despicable act—talk about democracy. Probably the most despicable, antidemocratic act done in this House was bringing the budget to a car parts factory up in Aurora, where I think the second-wealthiest man in Canada lives. They brought it to his backyard. They took it out of this place.

So the opposition, the mover of this motion, is saying that we're the ones who should be questioned about our integrity and our respect for process? They brought the budget of this Legislature, for the first time in the history of all Western parliamentary Legislatures, whether it be England, even the United States—even George Bush. None of them ever thought of bringing the budget process to a car parts factory. That's what they did, and they're telling us, "Don't trust the Liberals." We say, "These are the guys who did the bogus Magna budget," where they denied that there was a \$5.6-billion deficit.

'And they tell us that we are not coming with the straightforward goods to the people of Ontario? To this day, if you ask one of them when they stand up, "Is there that deficit? Was it there?" they still deny the fact there is a \$5.6-billion deficit.

We find ourselves in a similar position. My good friend here who just passed an incredible piece of legislation about protecting children from being run over by reckless drivers who pass school buses, Pat Hoy, the member from Chatham-Kent Essex—that's the kind of legislation the people of Ontario want: Protect our children, protect our communities, protect our farms.

1600

I was referring to the member from Chatham-Kent Essex about farms because I was trying to figure out an analogy. The best analogy is, we came into government—it's like a person buying a farm. Imagine: You buy this farm from this person. It looks like a great farm. You get to the farm and the first thing you notice when you go into the barn is that the roof almost caves in on your head because nobody's been patching the holes in the roof for the last 10 years, so the barn roof is coming down on you. Then you say, "Oh, well, it's just the barn. We'll fix the barn."

Then you go into the farmhouse and check the farmhouse. "Well, this doesn't seem too bad." All of a sudden, boom: You fall through the floor. They hadn't been checking the termites that have been eating the foundation because they hadn't been taking care of the basics. Then you turn on the tap in the kitchen sink and the water is brown, and you say, "God, we can't drink that water." Then you go check the well and you find out the well is dry. You do a test of the well and the well's contaminated. That's what we got.

You go see the animals out in the field—and my colleague from Norfolk knows this—and the animals are all skin and bone. They haven't been feeding the animals. So the animals are malnourished; they're skin and bone. The roof's falling in in the barn. There's no plumbing inside the farmhouse. Lo and behold, you go through the deed again—you know, down Leamington way you've got to check the deed—and you find out that the sons of guns had a \$5.6-billion hidden mortgage on the property, a lien on it, that they hoodwinked you with some crooked so-and-so of a person.

This is what happened here in Ontario. We inherited a province that they claimed was in good shape. They swore up and down with their friends, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, "Oh, trust us in this province; we're great financial managers." We find out that essentially we're on the verge of bankruptcy, because not only did they put this deficit of \$5.6 billion, they've been adding to the provincial debt. The provincial debt has been increased. If you include the hydro debt, it's almost \$140 billion of debt that they have on the books. Never mind the deficit; \$140 billion.

Do you know what it costs us to carry that deficit? It costs you, the taxpayers of Ontario, over \$10 billion a year in interest payments on their debt. Next to health

care and education, the third-largest bill we have in the province of Ontario is paying interest on the provincial debt. That's what they left us with. They tell us, "You're not holding up to your commitments."

They have the gall to say that we Liberals—when they added to the debt—and I just mentioned hydro, by the way. Then we find out they brought in these American consultants. They paid them \$40 million. They called them the "dream team." There were four guys who came in from Texas. They were supposed to be nuclear experts. The former Minister of Energy who's moving this motion was part of this. They brought in the four American super-consultants. Do you know what they paid them?

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): No, what did they pay them?

Mr Colle: Forty million dollars to fix the hydro problem at Pickering.

Mr Brown: Forty million?

Mr Colle: Forty million. Do you know what these four guys spent trying to fix Pickering? You'll never fathom the amount: \$3 billion. You pay them \$40 million. They took \$3 billion out of the back pockets of Ontario taxpayers. They were supposed to be watching them. This guy from Nepean-Carleton, who was supposed to be Minister of Energy, was the watchdog. He was the watchdog at Pickering, making sure—

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe the member should be addressing his remarks through the Chair, respectfully.

The Deputy Speaker: The member's reminded of that. Thank you.

Mr Colle: Every time I mention the \$3-billion boondoggle at Pickering, they don't want me to mention it. They don't want me to talk about the dream team that spent 40 million of your dollars. As I said at the beginning, as I conclude, they don't want to talk about that; they want to change the channel, because the truth hurts. It hurts because we're paying for it in our schools, our hospitals, our cities, and then we're paying for it through the deficit they left us and this ballooning debt they left us that is really our children's future. That's why, on this side of the House, we're not going to let people forget what they did to this province and to the people of Ontario.

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I'm very pleased to join in the debate today. Just to remind those here what the debate is about, it's an opposition day motion. I shall read that:

"That the Legislative Assembly call upon the government,

"To recognize that the Premier ruled out raising taxes over the course of the last election, just six short months ago, by saying the following: 'We will not raise taxes one cent on Ontario families,'

"To recognize that Liberal caucus members over the last several years have consistently stood in opposition to user fees, and have publicly labelled user fees 'tax increases,'

"And to recognize that the Premier has publicly insisted that user fees were recommended to him in his pre-budget hearings, but is unable to give the name of one single person who actually asked for new user fees,

"That the Legislative Assembly calls upon the McGuinty government to live by the promises made during the most important public consultation session, namely, the last election, and rule out any and all new and increased user fees in advance of the May 18 budget."

I think it's important, in light of this motion, to bring up a very important document that Dalton McGuinty, the Premier, signed in the past election. I think it did play a pivotal part in terms of calming people's fears that a Liberal government would be a government that would spend a lot of money and not worry about the fiscal side of running a government. That was the taxpayer protection promise.

With great fanfare, the Premier signed the taxpayer protection promise: "I, Dalton McGuinty, leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario, promise, if my party is elected as the next government, that I will not raise taxes, or implement any new taxes, without the explicit consent of Ontario voters—and not run deficits. I promise to abide by the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act." It's signed with the Premier's signature, and with a witness. It was a very public ceremony. I say that was very important in the past election.

I would have to ask the Premier, when he signs cheques, does the bank honour them? This signature does not seem to be carrying much weight, as the new government has gone through the process, repeatedly, of blaming the fact that they are planning on breaking this promise on the deficit.

I would remind those watching that the government has been in power six months now. They have had ample time to get the fiscal house of the province of Ontario in order. They have not made the tough decisions to work toward a balanced budget. They have, in fact, I think, planned on having a \$5.6-billion deficit, and are doing whatever they can to justify that.

During the election campaign, just six months ago, the now-Premier ruled out raising taxes. He said, "We will not raise taxes one cent on Ontario families." It was one of the pillars of their platform. Through the past many years, many of the same Liberal members who sat on the other side of this House consistently referred to user fees as tax increases, saying they were essentially the same.

On September 2, 1997, the now-Minister of Community and Social Services stated, "You can call them taxes or you can call them user fees." She goes on to say, "Let's look at some examples of ministries that have actually implemented significant user fees right across the board in Ontario—lots of ways to tax people. Here's a very hidden way that you've managed to tax people."

On September 25, 1997, the now-Minister of Energy stated, "The income taxpayer is the same as the property taxpayer and the same as the person who pays user fees. We intend to work with those property taxpayers and those people who are paying user fees to say no to your

tomfoolery and restore a sense of order and decency to this province."

Government members have made the connection between user fees and tax increases very clear. Now these same people are talking about the possibilities of increasing user fees in the next budget. They said they wouldn't raise taxes, they said that user fees were the equivalent of a tax increase, and now they want to increase user fees. Therefore, according to their own logic, the government is, in fact, proposing to increase taxes. This is clearly a very substantial broken election promise.

They were elected on a platform of which no increased taxes were a major part. Now they are breaking that promise. This is a matter of accountability; a matter of voters knowing what they're voting for. This is what is at the root of why people don't vote: because they think that politicians will just say one thing to get elected and then, once they're elected, they do something very different.

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In leading up to justifying what, I think, on May 18 will be a budget that does not balance—and who knows how long they're going to continue that—the government went through a consultation process, where they spent at least \$200,000 of the taxpayers' money to consult with 250 people across the province. They were nicely orchestrated consultations that I think were just geared to justifying how they can run a deficit. Really, in those consultations they only asked four questions, and I think they missed some questions. "Four Possible Approaches to Meeting Government's Priorities: change the way government delivers services; concentrate on core priorities; raise additional revenues; and foster conservation and sustainability of resources."

Those were the options. There was nothing in there about controlling spending.

They didn't ask people of the north. A quote from the North Bay Nugget:

"More Budget Input Needed.

"A \$200,000 report commissioned by the Liberals reiterates what Premier Dalton McGuinty has been hinting at for several weeks—prepare to pay higher fines, user fees and perhaps, taxes on lottery winnings....

"Critics were quick to pounce on the report, noting people polled weren't given alternatives, such as a deficit-reduction platform based on ideas from the two opposition parties.

"In fact, critics pointed out the report looked very much like the Liberal election platform....

"Another supported option, according to the study, is higher fees for things like fishing licences. Those polled must have been in high rise buildings in downtown Toronto and buy their fish at the local market, convinced they're manufactured at a factory somewhere.

"Nobody in northern Ontario could have been included in the poll....

"It seems that part of the report was simply a bail-out option to help the Liberals avoid tough decisions such as

selling assets, cutting government services and tightening the provincial belt....

"The reality is McGuinty shouldn't use this report, hardly worth the \$200,000 spent, to walk away from tough decisions."

And it's those tough decisions that I believe the government has got to make. They have not been willing, in the first six months of governing, to make those tough decisions.

This week, in my local paper, the Parry Sound North Star, there was an excellent article about the spending habits of the government: "Liberals Are Spendaholics."

"Since taking office a scant six months ago, Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty has made spending announcements totalling over \$2.5 billion....

"Sadly, spendaholic governments can find endless ways to guzzle taxpayers' green. Let's face it, it is easier to spend more than act responsibly and balance the budget. But like too many rounds of drinks the night before, the next morning everyone wakes up with a hang-over—and when government goes on a bender, it's taxpayers who pay the price." And I'm afraid the government has been going on a bender the last six months.

"Reinvention and prioritizing are what's required to get Ontario back on its fiscal feet. Premier McGuinty needs to break his government's spending addiction once and for all," and I certainly agree with that.

The Premier also needs to keep his promise, which was so clearly outlined in the election last October. He needs to keep that promise, and that's what I would like to see him do.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Wow. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I was just looking at the time on the clock.

I want to rise in support of this motion, and I want to tell you why for a couple of reasons. I think it was sort of touched on—well, it wasn't sort of touched on, it was very directly touched on by the two previous speakers from the Conservative caucus. That is, we understand that there's a certain cynicism amongst voters, not only in this province—probably a little bit more so today than it was before—but there's certainly some cynicism within voters across North America, and specifically in our jurisdiction of Canada.

I think we have to understand why voters have a certain cynicism when it comes to politicians. I think one of the issues is people want to be able to take us at our word. People want to know that during an election time when people come knocking at their door from whatever political party it might be, and when they see the party leaders and debates and they watch the advertising on TV and listen to it on the radio and read it in the paper and they get the leaflet at the door, what people are running on is basically what they're going to do when they get elected. If there's a cynicism in this province, and if there is this motion in the House today, it is greatly because this government has decided to basically do the opposite of what they talked about doing in the election, both by way of their platform and by way of their words and many examples.

We know, for example—and I'm just going to raise a couple of them.

We know, for example that the government ran, prior to the election and during the election, on the promise of stopping development on the Oak Ridges moraine. The ballot boxes weren't even cold, and Mr McGuinty and his Minister of Municipal Affairs basically reneged on the promise to the people of Oak Ridges who voted for them on the basis of stopping development on the Oak Ridges moraine.

We ask ourselves, "Why are voters cynical?" If I were one of those voters, one of those people affected by what was happening with development on the Oak Ridges moraine, and I was out shopping for a candidate and a party to champion my cause, and I supported and voted for the Liberals by way of just voting, by way of sending a cheque to support a local campaign or by going to work on somebody's local campaign, I would be not only cynical but, quite frankly, angry for having seen a party purport that they're going to stop development on the Oak Ridges moraine and do the opposite the minute after they're elected.

There are other examples. We know that the government promised to reduce auto insurance premiums by at least 10% to 20%. In the communities I represent in the riding of Timmins-James Bay, that was the number one issue in the campaign, followed by public power. The number one issue for me in the last election, other than hydro, was what people were paying when it came to exorbitant rates for auto insurance. I campaigned and said that if I was elected to government, what we needed to do was to move to public auto.

We have learned a lesson as New Democrats. I want to say to my good friend Mr Brown that we have learned a very valuable lesson, having been in government before. It is something that we had committed to do that we didn't do, and the voters punished us. They said: "You didn't deliver on auto insurance; off to the penalty box you go." Rightfully so. We learned something out of that as New Democrats. We've said: "Let's be very careful about what we say in an election campaign and leading up to a campaign when we're making promises and commitments to voters." I was very conscious in the election of 2003 that auto insurance was an issue, and I was very cognizant of the fact if I promised that we were going to do public auto, we had to do it.

Instead, this government said, "Oh, auto insurance is an issue in some parts of Ontario, so we have to be on the auto insurance kick, too," so they promised the people of Ontario that they were going to reduce auto insurance from 10% to 20%. We all saw it. My good friend Mr Bartolucci from Sudbury has constituents in his riding who are jumping mad about how much they have to pay for auto insurance. I would be willing to guess that not a member in this assembly hasn't had somebody come into their constituency office since they were elected to this Legislature on October 2, 2003, with a problem with auto insurance, as far as rising rates.

A lot of voters said: "You know what? I'm going to vote for Dalton McGuinty because he's got a chance of

being elected as Premier and he's speaking about reducing auto insurance rates, not on average for the whole population, but my auto insurance rate by 10% to 20%." What did we get? The government gets elected. Mr McGuinty takes power, and he appoints Mr Sorbara as the Minister of Finance. They are wonderful gentlemen; I have great respect for those two gentlemen. I've served in the Legislature many years with them. But the basic problem is they broke their promise. They said in the election that they were going to reduce auto insurance rates. I've got all kinds of examples of people coming into my constituency office, as we see across this province, when it comes to auto insurance rates going through the roof, not being reduced by 10% and 20%, but increasing by 20% and 25%.

My leader raised the issue of State Farm today, the third-largest auto insurer in Ontario, who are saying that they're going to reduce rates by only 4%. I have examples of people who are insured with State Farm, who have had no driving convictions since their last insurance renewal the year before, who have no difference in circumstance when it comes to who's driving the car or the kind of car they're driving, and their auto insurance is going up. The public is saying, "Hey, you promised you were going to reduce auto insurance by 10% to 20%, and here we finding ourselves paying more."

As I said at the beginning, we wonder why voters are cynical? I happened to be in Hamilton yesterday. We all know there's a by-election there. I thought I'd give my good friend Andrea Horwath a bit of a hand by going out to knock on doors yesterday afternoon. It was a wonderful sunny afternoon, and I thought it was a good thing to be to doing. I went out and knocked on doors, and I was astounded, because I expected to walk into that riding and find a bit of a mix. People have been telling me: "Andrea's going to win. She's doing well." I don't believe that until I go to a doorstep and really get a sense, so I canvassed two polls yesterday. I was astounded. Of the two issues, number one was broken promises. I got that at more doors in the Hamilton riding that was served by Mr Agostino than any other issue that was raised at the door. I wouldn't say it was raised at every door, but when people said they were upset it was on the issue that Dalton McGuinty said he was going to do something about, and he did completely the opposite when it came to what he promised during the election. People said to me at the doors in Hamilton, "I am voting for Andrea Horwath and New Democrats because I believe that Liberals can't be trusted at their word, and we need to send a message to the people at Queen's Park that they've got to keep their word."

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The second issue that was raised, and it's a bit of an inside baseball issue for some but for the people of Hamilton a very important issue, is this whole approach to nomination. Remember, Paul Martin ran and said, "When I am running for leadership, I'm going to have a clear, open, transparent process where people who want to run for office are going to have to run and they're

going to have to go for the nominations." So what he does is, he—I couldn't say that word; it wouldn't be nice. He was not very fair with Mrs Copps. I would only put it that way.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: We nominate everywhere. So federally we have Mrs Copps, who basically got put in the position where Mr Martin decided that he wanted to have another candidate win that particular nomination, and she got pushed out. Then they closed the nomination process and didn't allow other people who were interested in running under the Liberal flag an opportunity to run for nomination in that particular by-election. That was the second issue I raised.

Do you know what other issue was raised? Members might be somewhat surprised. Listen to this. I was a little bit surprised at the other one. The other issue that was raised on at least two doorsteps was the whole issue of what happens with kids with autism. I was a little taken aback. I went to one door where a woman, who has two children—I wish I could remember her name; I can't remember it offhand. I think she lives on Tuxedo Avenue, if I remember correctly. The woman basically said to me, "I voted for Dominic Agostino and Mr McGuinty in the last election because they promised that they were going to put an end to the discrimination against children with autism." She said, "My child is now seven and a half years old. He has basically been withdrawn from services when it comes to autism. I have to pay out of my own pocket the dollars necessary to be able to give my child the support he needs. I'm a single mother. I barely can afford it. I can't maintain my house. I can't buy the clothes that I need to buy for my children. We have to skimp and save to provide for this child." She said, "I remember that I raised this issue in the last provincial election, and I was told by the Liberal candidate, and it was repeated by Dalton McGuinty, that he would fund the issue of autism for children over six years old."

I want to be really specific to this, because to me this is one of those broken promises that shouldn't be broken. In the grand scheme of things, for the amount of money it's going to cost us to fund kids in need of autism services, it ain't going to break the Ontario bank. It's not going to bust our bank account.

I want to remind you what Mr McGuinty said on September 17 during the election. This was pointed out to me by two people, both with kids with autism, as I was knocking on doors yesterday. So this is not an issue that affects just a few people; it affects far more people than you realize. He said, "I also believe that the lack of government funding of IBI treatment for autistic children over six is unfair and discriminatory. The Ontario Liberals support extending autism treatment beyond the age of six." That particular woman said, "I voted Liberal in the last election and, I'm telling you, I'm going to vote for Andrea Horwath and the New Democrats because it is the NDP that have been consistently raising this issue, and the Liberals who promised it are not moving on that

promise. If I can send one message to Dalton McGuinty, it's: 'I'm upset with what this has done to my child, with what this has done to my family and the position you put us in as parents with autistic kids and what it means to those children.'"

Why are there people who are cynical when it comes to politics? I say it's exactly for that reason. They want to know that if you're going to run and you're going to put your word on the pamphlet about whatever it is you're promising, you're going to move forward.

Let me go to the Conservatives for a second. I took great exception to 95% of what the Conservatives did. I don't agree. I think what they did was darned right destructive. But I'm going to give Mike Harris credit for one thing: He ran in the 1995 election on a platform that I didn't agree with. He was basically going to trounce on poor people. He was going to cut people's welfare rates. He was going to do a whole bunch of things that I thought were absolutely wrong. The one thing he got credit for, and I believe it's the reason he got a second term, is that he did what he said he was going to do.

What ends up happening is that the voters of Ontario—not necessarily because they were enamoured with what Mike Harris had done; I think it's pretty clear that in the last election they weren't very enamoured with what Mike Harris had done; I think it's pretty clear in the last election that they weren't very enamoured. Quite frankly, many of the policies—90% of them—that the Tories put in place, it turned out they weren't very successful. For example, our schools are lacking now when it comes to funding and being able to deal with the needs of children, our hospitals are falling behind, road infrastructure is falling behind, and our municipal tax system is a shambles. I think most people started to realize that what Mike Harris did was kind of silly and it didn't work very well and a lot of times was hurtful. But my point is this: He got a second term.

It frustrated me no end, as it did many people in this province, when he was re-elected to a second term. I said, "How can anybody vote a second time for a government that has done the things that he did?" It came down to a very simple thing. Most people don't understand the details of politics. They don't understand the end result of what we do. All they know is, if you say something, you may as well do it, and that's what Harris did. Where I think Eves got in trouble is that he changed that image to a great extent. You really didn't know what side of the fence Mr Eves sat on when it came to a number of his positions, on hydro and other issues. I think that was also part of the reason why they were defeated.

I say to the government, I'm going to support this particular motion. Why? Because I think, quite frankly, the Tories are right. You guys ran on a bunch of promises, you said that you were going to deliver on those promises, and you have not done—

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: You had about 235 promises, if I remember correctly. But anyway, the point is that you didn't deliver on those key commitments that you said you were going to deliver on.

I want to speak to the MPAC issue—for people who don't understand what that's all about, the Municipal Property Assessment Corp. We're probably getting this in most of our ridings. I know we're certainly getting it in northern Ontario. I was talking to members from rural Ontario who were getting this as well, and that is the mess that has been created in the municipal property assessment area by changes that were done by the previous Tory government. As this is a Tory motion, I'm going to take a liberty in order to talk about something that is of great concern to the people of my riding when it comes to municipal property assessment.

Here's what happened. The provincial government did a couple of things. They changed the assessment laws, which, in my view, greatly added to this problem. When they made the changes to the assessment laws—we had to come back, I believe, with four or five amendments to the bill, different pieces of the legislation. They never got it right. They changed the way we do assessment. They got rid of provincial assessors, put them into this new agency and got rid of about half of the staff that was there. But more importantly, in the new way that they assessed, they physically don't go to the house the way they used to before. There used to be a time when the way they'd figure out your assessment was to have an assessor come by and check out the property to see if there were any differences and if there was a need to make a change to assessment. Nowadays what they're doing is they take the sale of a house in the neighbourhood and they say, "Oh, OK. House at 248 Middleton Avenue," let's say, Timmins, "is on the rolls as being valued at \$100,000. Mr Bisson, who sold his house, got lucky and sold it for \$115,000. So therefore, there's a 15% increase in property value in that neighbourhood." Everybody's assessment goes up by 15%. If I'm the only house that was sold in my particular neighbourhood, that counts for the purposes of assessment.

The reality in communities across the province is that there are all kinds of examples where houses are sold way under value or way over value. I've got opposite examples of where people sold their houses because of depressed markets and ended up selling for a lot less than it was originally registered for within the Municipal Property Assessment Corp. The problem being in towns like Kapuskasing, places like—it was the same problem in Moonbeam, same problem in Smooth Rock Falls. I know we're going through a huge fight in Schumacher right now, which I'll talk about later. What happened there is, because of house sales in certain parts of neighbourhoods, they modelled this thing in the computer, and as a result, they ended up over-assessing about—I forgot what the number was; it was like 800 or 900 houses in a community of less than 10,000 people. So as a result, with good co-operation from the Municipal Property Assessment Corp—and I want to give credit to Darryl Bender, who runs the place. We had community town hall meetings; property owners got a chance to go and air their grievances. They went back and redid the assessments, and lo and behold, the assessments went

down. Now here we are with this problem in Schumacher, where we're having the opposite effect. The assessors have gone in and decided to increase the value on the property, and now people are jumping mad.

I'm just saying, if there's an issue that this government could deal on, it's trying to resolve the problems we're having with the Municipal Property Assessment Corp, because what has happened to assessment in this province is, quite frankly, pretty deplorable.

1630

I want to say to my friends in the Liberal caucus—and I know I have a few left after this speech, a good friend over here, I'm sure; I'm being very timid and mild today—that you're judged by your word. There will be another provincial election in four years' time, and people are going to judge you on your deeds, but also on your having kept your commitments and promises. I've got to say, from what I can see so far from my vantage point in the opposition, that you are not doing very well when it comes to keeping your promises. For every promise kept, you've got about nine broken.

So in baseball, you've got a pretty bad batting average. Most teams just usher you out to the juniors. You're in the big leagues now. We're asking you to do what you said you were going to do. Keep your commitment, keep your word, because at the end of the day, when you don't keep your word and you break your promises, it's not just Liberals who are affected by this; all of us politicians are seen in the same way. I don't know about you, but I love what I do. I think it's valued work that we do as representatives in this Legislature. I don't think it serves any of us well as parliamentarians or anybody well in the public when you have governments that go out and break their word.

Je veux soutenir cette motion. Je pense que le Parti conservateur est parfaitement bien dans son approche. Une des responsabilités du gouvernement est de garder les engagements qu'ils ont donnés dans la dernière élection. Ces engagements ont été clairs : 235 promesses. On dit au gouvernement très simplement, « Vous avez fait les élections. Vous avez donné vos promesses. Le monde vous a donné la confiance d'un mandat. Ce qu'on vous dit est très simple : gardez vos promesses. Gardez vos engagements avec le monde à qui vous avez fait ces promesses dans la dernière élection. Si vous faites ça, vous aurez probablement une chance. Sans ça, vous êtes fichu. »

À la fin de la journée, les électeurs vont se rappeler que vous êtes le gouvernement qui ne garde pas ses promesses. En faisant ça, je pense que la population ontarienne va être très claire dans sa prononciation contre ce gouvernement libéral dans la prochaine élection. Ce qui est clair, c'est qu'on voit déjà Hamilton, où il y aura une élection partielle, et on attend très clairement cette porte. C'est un gouvernement qui ne garde pas ses promesses; il faut voter pour M^{me} Andrea Horwath à Hamilton pour s'assurer qu'il y a quelqu'un pour garder ses promesses et travailler fort pour la communauté de Hamilton.

Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): Today we're here to debate an opposition motion that in a roundabout way is trying to provide advice to the government on the upcoming budget, an odd type of motion when you look at it, considering the fact that this advice is coming from a political party whose lack of confidence on fiscal issues has left most Ontarians in a state of shock.

This is advice coming from a political party that went into the last election hiding under a cloak of darkness of a \$5.6-billion deficit. This is advice from a political party that had a reputation at one time of being relatively fiscally responsible, which wasn't deserved, because they added \$32 billion to our debt in the time that they were in office.

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): Shameful.

Mr Duguid: They should be ashamed.

On top of the \$5.6-billion deficit, we all know that they also were hiding other deficits of over \$2 billion in places like hospitals, the children's aid societies and other agencies of the government.

This previous government worshipped at the altar of tax cuts, and they sucked so much revenue out of this province that they've taken away our ability to be a financially strong province. They've taken away our ability to be sustainable as a province. But they're offering us advice nonetheless, and I think we should be looking at their record as we assess that advice to see how credible it is.

This is a government that downloaded hundreds of millions of dollars on to the backs of our municipalities. Today we have before us a motion that suggests we should rule out all new and increased user fees, as if they have an aversion to user fees. What did those municipalities have to do when this government downloaded hundreds of millions of dollars on to them? They had to start increasing user fees, they had to start increasing property taxes, because they had no choice. They weren't doing that just to provide good services and maintain their level of services. They were doing that just to keep their heads above water because of all the downloading that this government had done on them.

Mr Berardinetti: Shameful.

Mr Duguid: It was shameful. It was absolutely shameful.

They had to pay more for social assistance, they had to pay more for shelters and they had to pay more for transit. They had to find other ways to do this, and they're still struggling. We're trying to work with them as best we can, as a government stuck with the financial situation they placed us in.

This advice is coming to us from a government that left office with OPG, Ontario Power Generation, in complete disarray. Now we're seeing scandal after scandal emerging from those years. We're seeing political hacks being paid millions of dollars. We're seeing billions in overpayments, billions of dollars of over-budgeting for projects in places like Pickering, \$40 million spent on the so-called dream team. What did that get us? It got us an

energy plan that is absolutely unsustainable right now. Thank goodness we were elected last October to get this problem cleaned up. Thank goodness we have a minister who understands that some tough decisions have to be made on the energy file, and we're going to proceed proudly to make those changes.

We're getting advice from a political party that during their days in office passed with great fanfare a Taxpayer Protection Act that they broke themselves when they were in office. Since the Conservatives left Ontario with a massive deficit, should we not be asking the ministers who were in that government, who knew there was a \$5.6-billion deficit, who were hiding that \$5.6-billion deficit from us and the public, to pay back 25% of their salaries? I think we should. I think they should be doing that. According to the act, the party that introduces a deficit budget must pay the fine. Well, they introduced the Magna budget, and we know there was a deficit in that budget. It turns out, according to the Provincial Auditor, that there was a \$5.6-billion deficit.

We're taking advice from a party that so despised low-income Ontarians that they failed to increase the minimum wage for them, a party that starved public education, forcing boards to introduce user fees for school facilities. This has impacted all our communities: Girl Guides, Scouts, community groups, seniors who want to use schools. Right now, many of these schools are sitting in our communities. Our youth need a place to go. Our youth need a place for recreation programs. But the user fees that came in because of their education funding formula, because of the way they starved the education system—our boards of education were forced to increase those user fees, making the centrepieces of our community almost unusable to our children. It's unfathomable.

We're getting advice from a political party that talks about opposing user fees. But when they were in office, they raised user fees in an almost unprecedented manner. In September 1999, the Tories raised many user fees associated with owning and operating bingo halls. In the year 2000, the Tories raised to \$360 the fee for incorporating an Ontario company under the Business Corporations Act. In December 2001, the Tories raised to \$50 the fees for delayed birth registration. They also raised several fees associated with owning and operating you-brew businesses. In addition, in the area of transportation, they brought in a dollar fee for using automated licensing kiosks. For the driver's handbook, which used to be free to all our drivers, they brought in a fee of \$7.95. In 2000, they thought, "That's not enough. It should be \$12.95." Here's a party now telling us they have an aversion to user fees that raised user fees every chance they got when they were in office.

I don't think we should listen to their advice. I think there are other parties we should be turning to for advice, and that's what we're doing in thinking about this budget, with our unprecedented consultation with the people we really should be listening to, the people of Ontario. We've gone from city to city, town to town, community to community across this province with our budget hearings, listening to the people of this province

for advice. We've listened to the civil servants at all levels of government, because they really know what's going on around here, not like the previous government.

I'm pleased to stand and tell the members opposite that we will not be taking their advice on the budget. Their advice lacks credibility in the extreme. We will be taking the advice of the residents of Ontario. I can't wait for the Minister of Finance to come forward with this budget, because I know it's going to reflect that advice.

1640

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I certainly stand today in support of the motion to have the McGuinty government live up to its promises—promises to rule out any and all new and increased user fees in advance of the budget on May 18.

I'd first like to point out that no matter what you call it—a user fee, a tax increase, a levy, tax-cut rescinding or deferral—it really all means the same thing: You're taking more money out of more people's pockets across the province.

I want to point out that, sadly, it's already too late for the McGuinty government to truly live up to previously broken promises, as we saw Premier McGuinty tell Ontario farmers, seniors, small business people, parents. We all heard Mr McGuinty tell the people of Ontario—and we've heard this before today—"I won't cut your taxes, but I won't raise them either," again and again on television in the month leading to the election. Many people believed Mr McGuinty then; now, with good reason, they're hanging on to their wallets.

That includes people in Hamilton East. That particular riding has been mentioned more than once today. People are disillusioned. Regrettably, when I knock on doors, they're disillusioned with politicians in general, and more specifically, they have figured out what's going on. They're disillusioned with politicians breaking promises. I'm very pleased that someone like Tara Crugnale, our PC candidate, is there to explain to people. She will help us hold Premier McGuinty to account on these broken promises.

I know that a fellow named Dennis McDonald from Brantford heard the Liberal promises. In fact, he's written a letter to the Brantford Expositor that I would like to quote in part. He writes, "We'll remember broken promises." He goes on to say: "The Liberals made all the right promises and guarantees, and the people believed them. However, the Liberals have already broken just about every one that comes to the table since they took office."

He goes on: "I am so tired of the lies and cry-baby answers the Liberals give every time they get caught. You know what I mean: 'It's not our fault; the PCs left us a \$5-billion deficit.' And my favourite, 'The NDP or PC government made the same mistake last year or five years ago.'" Again, I'm quoting from this letter:

"The Liberals just don't get it. It is not what was left or what the PC or NDP did. It's time to go on and help the people, not take more out of their pockets.

"I have come to the conclusion that the Liberal Party thinks the people of Ontario have really bad memories.

"If the Liberals think they can take millions out of our pockets now and come back just before an election and give us back a few dollars and get our vote ... I believe they're dead wrong."

Again, we all saw Mr McGuinty sign the commitment with the Canadian Taxpayers Federation—this commitment was raised a number of times in question period today—a commitment to not raise taxes and not run a deficit. I will mention that the CTF put out a news release yesterday expressing their disappointment with this government. In that release, their director, Tasha Kheiriddin, says, "Mr McGuinty campaigned on the pledge. He was elected on the pledge. He must be held accountable for his promise."

She goes on to say, "It's not only a promise, but it's the law. The Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act was enacted to protect taxpayers from politicians who would overtax, overspend and send this province deeper into debt."

Now we read—and I read this today in the National Post—an article titled, "Grits to Change Multi-Year Deficits Rule: Another Broken Promise." The article begins with a sentence that really pours cold water on that Liberal election promise: "In a move that breaks a promise to deliver balanced budgets every year, Ontario's new Liberal government will change the province's Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act to allow for multi-year deficits." This came from the CanWest news service.

It goes on: "Tasha Kheiriddin ... said changing the Taxpayer Protection Act to allow multi-year deficits within the government's mandate would 'be a mistake' that will not make it easier to improve key programs....

"If they do this, they will be breaking their trust with voters who elected them to balance the books this year."

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation has taken their cause to people through an on-line petition, and I'm sure Premier McGuinty will get a chance to see these petitions as they come pouring in.

I'd like to give everyone here and those watching a chance to hear what the CTF is asking. In their petition they point out:

"On the 11th of September 2003" Premier McGuinty "signed a pledge to uphold the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act if [his] party formed the next government of Ontario."

I know the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka addressed this issue, and it bears repeating. I will read the pledge that was signed by the Premier:

"Not raise taxes or implement new taxes without the explicit consent of Ontario voters," and, as we know, "Not run deficits."

The petition goes on to say the government has "suggested that certain tax credits may be repealed, thus increasing the tax burden on Ontarians." The government has further stated that the budget "will likely not be balanced in the next fiscal year."

So I say to Liberals opposite and in the rump that this move would fail to respect the will of the people who elected you. You would continue to lose the trust Ontarians placed in you to safeguard their hard-earned tax dollars.

If anyone wants some information on this petition, go on the Web site www.taxpayer.com. It makes for some interesting reading.

As I've been saying, we all heard the leader of the Liberals make these sweeping commitments to keep his hand out of the wallets of Ontarians, and then we all watched as he dug deeper into taxpayers' pockets than ever before. We saw the introduction of legislation before Christmas that brought us the largest tax hike in Ontario history, larger even than his Liberal predecessor David Peterson. He only—and I say "only" in the loosest terms—hit us with \$2.8 billion in extra taxes, insignificant in comparison to the \$4.13 billion we've seen so far in the so-called Fiscal Responsibility Act, and we still haven't seen the budget.

We see the same Dalton McGuinty who told us he wouldn't raise taxes trying to cover his tracks, trying to justify actions. The \$200,000 so-called consultants' report was a set-up. People in that particular consultation indicated—this is hard to believe—they wanted to pay more for services and more in user fees. I can tell you, in talking to people at the door in Hamilton East, that they're not telling me that. I am hearing information more in line with what the CTF is telling us.

In earlier debate we heard the expression "spendaholics." The taxpayers federation has a program for spendaholics, a 12-step program. It's quite appropriate considering this government's addiction to tax and fee hikes, and a dependence on rules, regulations and red tape, all directed to fostering the ever-increasing size of government.

There are about a dozen recommendations. I'll mention two:

"That the government abide by its election pledge to uphold the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act and not run a deficit or raise taxes;

"That the government focus on its core priorities, eliminate waste, cut government spending, and pursue a results-based approach as opposed to simply measuring dollars spent."

Clearly, this government has got to stand up and admit that it has a spending problem, an addiction if you will, not a revenue problem. Premier McGuinty has got to get spending under control in the coming budget if there's any hope of restoring fiscal order in this province; if not, we will see a Liberal deficit in spite of all the hikes in taxes and in spite of all the user fees that are coming down the pike.

1650

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): I would pose a question to all of my colleagues here. What do you do when you make a promise based on someone else's promise? I'll give you an example. When I go back on Thursday and I take the train and my son, who's nine years old, says to me, "Well, Daddy, what time are you

going to be home?” I’m going to say to him, “I’ll be home at 7:40.” The train leaves at 5:20 from Toronto, and it gets into Stratford at 7:40. If he says, “Well, will you promise me, Daddy?” I’ll say, “As long as the train is there, that’s what time I’m supposed to be there,” because Via Rail says I will pull into the station at 7:40.

It’s unfortunate, but sometimes other people let you down. Sometimes you’re not able to keep your word if you’ve based it on the good faith of someone else. If there’s anything that our party did in the previous election that was an error, I can tell the good people of Ontario it’s very simply that: that we actually took the honourable members from the previous government at their word. We rue the day we did that.

The only way we could set our platform, the only way we could go to the people with an apples-to-apples comparison, was to look at that infamous Belinda budget, the Magna budget, the budget that wasn’t here in this Legislature but instead at Magna car parts. I ask the question: Why were we at chez Belinda? Why were we there?

If that budget had been held in this House, if that budget had been here, then we would have had the chance, as the opposition party of the day, to hold the government and their fiscal assumptions to account, to call them into committee and say, “Show us, in good faith, your plan for the people.”

I always wondered why a government, when it had received—I believe every editorial newspaper report of note in this province condemned the previous government for throwing away 800 to 900 years worth of parliamentary tradition. A Speaker who had come from their own caucus had condemned them. I said of the previous government, “Why did they have the budget at Belinda’s?” It was very simple. In my opinion, they needed to avoid the fact that their assumptions could not see the light of day.

We made sure that the people of Ontario had a clear choice. In our platform, we took the previous government’s numbers, their economic assumptions—and this is, to be fair, before SARS, before the blackout, before mad cow—and laid out our fiscal plan so people would have an apples-to-apples comparison.

I’m a certified financial planner, someone who deals with money. You need to be able to compare apples to apples. That’s the only fair way to do it.

But there was one huge, gaping hole in their budget numbers that we were most concerned about. That was the sale, I believe, of almost \$2 billion worth of assets that hadn’t been identified. I remember in the campaign—I was campaigning, and I’m sure you were too, Mr Speaker—asking, “Which assets are to be sold?”

When the Minister of Finance and the former Provincial Auditor finally got a chance to look at the books when we formed the government, they went to the Ministry of Finance and they said, “OK, what assets are you in the midst of trying to sell?” There were none.

There was always going to be a \$2-billion hole in that budget. If they were planning on selling assets by the end of March and not having a fire sale like the 407, then obviously they would have had some due diligence and

done some work to make sure that those assets that were in Mrs Ecker’s budget held at Belinda Stronach’s place would have been identified. No one from the opposition has ever been able to come to me and say, “Yes, we had a plan to sell these assets to a total of \$2 billion.” That’s amazing, because my understanding is that we have about \$14 billion worth of hard assets in the whole province of Ontario that our government owns. So \$2 billion is a lot.

We had already gotten rid of the 407 and sold it off to private interests so that the people who take the 407 pay more and more fees every day, despite the fact that I remember the former Premier saying before that 1999 election—I remember that election because I ran in that election and I lost that election, because the previous government said, “No, we keep our word. Vote for us. We keep our word.” What happened? You just tell the people on the 407 whether or not the previous government kept its word about tolls going up and down.

When we look into this context, once bitten, twice shy. What did we do as a government when we took over and discovered this? I had an interesting chat with people from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. The Premier had signed the Taxpayer Protection Act. He did. Many of my colleagues were there. I wasn’t there, but he was there and I was proud of him when he did it.

Here’s the interesting thing, and I’ve always found this to be quite remarkable. The soon-to-be Premier signed that, and it was mere weeks later that the Canadian Taxpayers Federation—I think we’ll all remember this—said, “Guess what? We think there could be a \$4.5-billion deficit.” The Canadian Taxpayers Federation knew this province was running a deficit. Did they tell the people of Ontario before or after politicians were asked to sign that pledge? They told us after. Now, all of a sudden someone who misrepresented to us is getting in the newspapers all across Ontario, and on television there’s a lovely woman in pink who goes on and tells us that somehow we should have known better. If we should have known better, then perhaps she and her predecessor, Mr Williamson, should have been saying to the good people of Ontario, “My God, we think there is a \$4.5-billion deficit being run by the previous government, that they’ve hidden that fact. They’ve hidden that fact by having a budget over at Belinda Stronach’s place.”

I just find it passing strange for these people—I’ve said in the House before that if you’re looking for the definition of “chutzpah,” you can talk to the people who have introduced the opposition motion today, who come into this House and decide they’re going to preach to us, that somehow they know all about fiscal probity, that somehow they were running a tight ship.

At OPG, which I call Ontario patronage generation, we had a culture of mismanagement of \$40 million spent to have the Pickering A refit end up going from a \$700-million project to a \$3-billion project. Who was in charge? Who was looking after that file? It was the sponsor of today’s resolution, the good member from Nepean-Carleton, who’s decided to waltz into this House and lecture us and our government.

What have we done to make sure that once bitten, twice shy? We have to make sure this never happens again to the good people of Ontario. One of the things we've done, in regard to changing the Audit Act, is taken the Provincial Auditor and we're creating a new, more powerful position, the Auditor General, who will be able to go into our transfer partners and find these little hidden bags of cash, or, as I like to say, these hidden deficits that permeated the fiscal state of this province and route them up so that we can have an accounting.

You can't create a financial plan if the numbers you base it on are false. If you make a promise to someone and the information you base is on is not correct, you have to ask the question, where did the source come from? Even my nine-year-old understands that if I tell him I'll be coming in at 7:40 on the train, and the train is late, I'm late. That doesn't mean I don't want to be home. That doesn't mean I won't get home. That doesn't mean I have to learn to be careful. But what I have to do in business is—you're only as strong as the information you're given. What we've done for the good people of Ontario is made sure that that information will be accurate from now on.

1700

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm very happy to rise today to support this resolution from my good colleague the member from Nepean-Carleton, who's very active in working with our party to try to get some answers out of the newly elected government.

When I ran for Parliament in 1999, I really was never much of a political animal as far as political parties go. I certainly had supported the Tories but I didn't plan on becoming a member of Parliament. The reason I ran was really because of the actions of Mike Harris.

I come from a small municipality and worked with the municipal government. Of course, I was a small businessman as well. After 10 years—we called it the lost decade—business people in the province of Ontario and municipalities had just about had enough of David Peterson and Bob Rae and all the painful times they put people through, basically turning their backs on small business communities and turning their backs on municipalities until there was nothing left of them and there was no confidence left.

Then along came Mike Harris, and guess what? Mike Harris said he would do what he had promised to do. He kept his word. Mike Harris came in, in 1995, and he did exactly what he said he would do. Even if you were a New Democratic Party member or you were a member of the Liberal Party, people respected that. That was where the bar was set. Whether you agreed with his policies or not—and many people didn't, but it was enough to win two majority governments—the fact of the matter is he kept his word. Promises made, promises kept.

Then along came Dalton McGuinty and his plan for Ontario. Remember that? "I have a plan for the working families of Ontario." Well, he had a plan, all right. He hasn't kept one word of his plan yet. This guy was elected in October 2003, and all he has done to this point is find expert panels. He's created this ridiculous book

here at \$200,000 that was untended. The bogus deficit numbers were produced in about three days, when anything else in the Ministry of Finance or the Provincial Auditor took months and months to proceed. But he came up with this \$5.8-billion deficit immediately. That is what Mr McGuinty has actually worked with to this point; that's all he has really done, is talk about the \$5.8-billion deficit. He hasn't taken any leadership.

What we've seen are broken promises, one after another, as recently as the moratorium on school closures this week. I couldn't believe it when they stood up and said there were going to be 100 schools closed in the next year, after having an announcement that there would be a moratorium on school closures. The guy doesn't know what he's talking about, plain and simple, and that's the Minister of Education, coming up with a moratorium. A moratorium is a moratorium. I'm sorry, but we're disappointed in that. Especially with so many rural caucus members, we thought, "Let's keep the boards under control here; the minister might know what he's talking about." No. The boards are going ahead and doing what they want. There's no moratorium, and we feel really badly about that.

Then we got the blame for the debt, the blame for the deficit. That is how they are governing today. And, of course, the Taxpayer Protection Act, I understand, is about to be dismantled. That doesn't matter.

One of the things I've got some real concern about is that suddenly Mr McGuinty is going to play a leadership role in health care in Canada—the same guy who wouldn't sign a document to ask Allan Rock to provide proper health care funding to the citizens of the province of Ontario and all Canadians. He wouldn't sign that. Howard Hampton signed it; Mike Harris signed it. I can't think of a weaker person representing health care officials in Canada than Dalton McGuinty, and if you can believe he's actually going to take a health care leadership role, good luck, ladies and gentlemen of the province of Ontario. I don't think he's up to the job on this one.

There are a lot of things we can talk about today. I'm sorry we've only got 17 minutes left, because I've got two more people in our caucus that I've got to make room for to speak. But I will run into their time a little bit. The fact of the matter is, the citizens of Ontario, prior to this guy and prior to what I call now a fractured government, prior to these people, were used to a government that kept their word.

Interjections:

Mr Dunlop: I'm sorry. I was really quiet when you people were all speaking, and now you're heckling me and making noises. You don't want to hear the truth. Why are you always heckling me when I stand up in this House? Every time I stand up, you heckle me and heckle me and heckle me. Why are you doing that? I don't heckle you.

Interjections: Yes, you do.

Mr Dunlop: I never do. Well, I do sometimes.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Simcoe North, the Chair may be blind, but it's not deaf.

Mr Dunlop: Well, Mr Speaker, we have to have some fun in this House, and I do enjoy debating these particular motions.

But I do know that we are exceptionally concerned. We hope that all members of the House would support this motion.

Interjections.

Mr Dunlop: Maybe you won't support it, but the fact of the matter is I have a great deal of respect for John Baird. He is one of the hardest-working MPPs I have ever seen in my time here and, for all I know, one of the hardest-working MPPs we have in the country. I think there's no question that some day John Baird will probably be the Premier of this province.

Interjections.

Mr Dunlop: Don't laugh about it, because that's on record. I have a lot of respect for this guy. Of course, John isn't thinking of putting his hat in the ring this time, but there's no question—he's a very young guy; I think he's about 34 years old—he's got a great future. He's a fighter. He's fighting for the rights of Ontarians.

Whether you disagree with John Baird or you disagree with this motion, the fact of the matter is that the guy deserves a lot of respect in this House for bringing this kind of motion forward so we can debate it. That's what democracy is all about. I know you'll likely vote it down, but the fact is, it's the way we feel. We feel that the Taxpayer Protection Act should be supported. We believe it was a good piece of legislation. We're sorry the Premier stood during the election campaign and had that publicity stunt with all the media around him, signing the Taxpayer Protection Act and saying that now there were no deficits, that everything was perfect and he was going to carry on with no tax increases and continue to break the promises that he probably already had in the back of his mind.

We on this side of the House are supportive of this motion. I know my friend Mr Runciman is here now. With that, I would like to finish my comments. We will be supporting this and looking forward to May 18, a very important day in the history of the province this year. I understand the budget will be read in the House, but I also understand it will be four days after the by-election instead of four days before. I don't know why you wouldn't have it four days before the by-election. Also, I understand the budget will happen just before constituency week, when you hope it will die and fade away in that seven- or eight-day break that's happening. It's so blatantly obvious how you're trying to hide this budget this year. The media are all over you on this.

I get the same feeling about the date of the budget as I do when I see the look on Paul Martin's face these days. He looks like the cat that ate the canary. Every time you see him, he's got this sad look. He looks like he's going down. I believe he is, because we've had enough of Liberals in Ontario. I, for one, hope the federal election will start to clear the air for the citizens of Ontario. We want governments that keep their promises—promises made, promises kept—not broken promises and whatever Mr McGuinty is trying to operate over there.

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): I'm very pleased to have a chance to speak to the opposition day motion. Obviously today, none of us in this room wants to speculate as to what is going to be in the budget, but we do know it is coming on May 18. As my friend opposite indicated, that is the week before constituency week. For those of us on this side of the House who know we will have delivered a budget here in the Legislature, in the place where it should be delivered, we will be very proud to go back to our communities and talk about what is in that budget, just as we were pleased to go and speak to Ontarians to ask them how we should deliver on an Ontario that they wanted to see.

I personally had the opportunity to attend the budget town hall sessions we conducted across this province in Windsor, Toronto, London and Ottawa. At each of those budget town hall sessions, I had an opportunity to observe citizens of all political stripes. There were many card-carrying New Democrats and Conservatives in those audiences, many community activists and many people who really believed in sharing their ideas with the government about what kind of Ontario we should live in.

When we went to Ontarians, we weren't going back to redo the election. We got our marching orders on election day, and we are going to deliver for the people of this province good education and good health care, and live within our means. Those were marching orders that Ontarians gave us. When we became the government, we had an opportunity to really examine the fiscal constraints that this province was in. The province has been in a state of decay for the last decade, where we see our health care institutions crumbling, where we see off-book debt being held in abeyance to pretend that additional deficit did not exist.

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We were able to go out and talk to people in this province about the real state of affairs that existed in Ontario. The previous government had said that there was no fiscal deficit, that we have lots of electricity and that things are better than ever before in our hospitals and schools. On October 2, Ontarians indicated loudly and clearly that they disagreed, although they didn't know the real state of this province. What we did was go out across Ontario to have an opportunity to listen first-hand, in unprecedented dialogue with the citizens of this province, and to ask Ontarians to work with us.

I don't know if the members opposite took an opportunity to conduct a budget town hall in their own communities. As I said, I was at four regional ones that we conducted. It was an incredible experience to be listening to the people of this province, who had a chance to work together, sitting around a round table and looking at the very difficult issues that face our government, talking about how they want to us get from A to B—and exactly what route are we going to take? How fast are we going to go? How slowly are we going to go? Are we going to turn right? Are we going to turn left? What meandering, or not, direction are we going to take to get there? There were young people, old people, representatives, single,

married, parents, youth; all sorts of people had an opportunity to come—this was the face of Ontario—and listen to each other and say, “I want better education, I want better health care, I want us to live within our means,” and to give the government their very sound advice.

We’re going to listen to this advice. We know that the week after the budget we have an opportunity to go out to speak to people in our constituencies. In my own riding in Etobicoke-Lakeshore I’ll be hosting a budget breakfast immediately on the morning of May 19 to talk to the people in my community about what the budget says for them. We know it is going to be a Liberal budget, a sound budget. It’s going to be a responsible and reasonable budget and it’s going to reflect the very prudent, sound advice that we were given by the people in this province.

Yes, there has been lot of talk about the fact that Ontarians are cynical. They absolutely are cynical, because they feel they were sold a bill of goods by a previous government that said, non-stop, “There is no deficit in the province. We are good fiscal managers.” The people who were the most cynical and the most frustrated by what has happened in this province are many of those who really believed that. They now have been struck with the stark reality that what they believed the previous government was selling to them was in fact a bill of goods and wasn’t accurate.

I want to spend a few minutes talking about the advice that Ontarians gave us and the principles they asked to us follow. I had an opportunity to sit in the back of the room and listen to Ontarians’ advice. Certainly not all of the advice was consistent. When you bring a group of Ontarians together, you’re going to have an inability to reach consensus on a number of points. But the advice, by and large, did have common themes throughout. That’s the information that is consistent with what the citizens’ dialogue folks have put out in their material, as well as what we heard across the province. They told us that the budget should be balanced over the course of our mandate because they learned their lessons from the previous government about the really dire consequences of cutting and slashing and tax cuts at all costs. They did not want to live through an Ontario like that again. They told us that Ontarians should pay more of the real cost of natural resources so that we have a basic level of service for all Ontarians, but that that would encourage conservation. That was something that was really important to the people of this province.

They also wanted us to make sure we really looked at the issue, which is the topic for today, of how we would raise additional resources in this province. They gave us some really important, but consistent, guiding decisions. They said we should charge the real fees for services in this province; that if we were going to, as a province, deliver a service, then we should make a conscientious decision about whether or not taxpayer dollars subsidize that service.

Take one example: vanity licence plates. Sure, maybe we want to put—my predecessor had “MPP” on his licence plate, Etobicoke-Lakeshore MPP.

Mr. Leah: Is that what Morley Kells has?

Ms. Broten: That’s what Morley had on his licence plates. I don’t have that licence plate, but if I did, I should pay the real cost of getting that vanity licence plate. Those are the type of things that Ontarians told us they wanted to have.

We shouldn’t be subsidizing luxury boats. If you need a licence for your big boat to bring it on Lake Ontario, you should pay the real cost of that.

One thing they said loud and clear and that our government is listening to is that with those additional real fees, user fees to pay the real cost of things that you’re consuming in the province, we should be careful for those who are most vulnerable and can’t afford to pay for needed services. That’s a caveat that I think my friends across the way have not really listened to, because that information was provided to them in terms of what we’re going to do as a government. That user fee concept was very much to say, “But still be cognizant of those in our society who can’t pay the real fee.” When I had the opportunity in every corner of this province to sit and listen to what Ontarians were talking about, that is something that came across loud and clear. So those are many of the reasons they said, “Subsidize government services conscientiously.” That is an important piece of information and advice that we gained from the citizens of this province.

To tell you simply how wonderful those pre-budget town halls were, many of the folks, as they left the room, asked me if I would see them the same time next year. We look forward to continuing to consult with them.

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): I’m pleased to speak today in opposition to the opposition motion, a motion in which the Conservative Party is essentially telling us how a Liberal government should set its budget, according to Conservatives.

The member for Simcoe North, who spoke just a few minutes ago, made an interesting comment. He said that he ran because of a man called Mike Harris. I suppose in a way I ran because of a man called Mike Harris too. I ran because I didn’t like what a man called Mike Harris had done to this province.

When I went door to door, what voters told me was that they had caught on that while the Tories made all these great promises about cutting this tax, cutting that tax, making this more efficient and making that more efficient, what the Tories had really done was slash the services that the people of Ontario depend on.

They made cuts to education. Remember Mike Harris saying that there would be no cuts to the classroom? Anybody who is like me and came from the education sector knows that was a broken promise. The Tories absolutely made cuts to the classroom, and the voters told me they knew it.

Mike Harris said he wouldn’t make cuts to health care. He closed hospitals, and the voters out there said, “We’re really concerned about our health care. They aren’t enough doctors or nurses in our hospitals. We have a waiting time. We don’t want that to happen any more.”

They were concerned about Walkerton, they were concerned about meat inspection, and they were concerned about an electricity system that was near collapse. They understood that you can't, in fact, continually have both cuts to taxes and good service. They got it. The Tories' tax cuts didn't work, and you just can't believe Conservative promises that tell you about how you can pay less and get more. In fact, voters caught on that while their personal income tax rate may have gone down, a whole bunch of other things had gone up. They knew that provincial user fees had gone up. Remember, the Tories are telling us now, "Don't raise user fees." Well, they raised user fees.

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Let me tell you about some of the user fees they raised. Under the Business Corporations Act, if you want to incorporate a business, they raised the fee to \$360.

If you were for some reason delayed in registering your baby's birth—they raised the fee to \$50.

If you are a young driver and you want to get the driver handbook so you'd know the rules of the road of Ontario, or maybe you're a senior and have to retry the exam—they raised the fee to \$7.95. You used to get it for free, and now it costs almost \$13.

If you want to get a freedom of information request—the Tories raised the fee.

They want to have an application for renewal of a licence under the Private Investigators and Security Guards Act—they raised the fee. Maybe that wasn't a bad thing, because people were paying for the cost of processing, but they raised the fee.

If you want to apply to OSAP, the Ontario student assistance program, for a student loan, you've got to pay a fee. What's really problematic—and I hear about this because I live in a university town and my constituents complain—is that if you wanted to inquire about what has happened to your student loan application, they charge a fee.

These are the people who have a motion today that we shouldn't have any increased user fees, when in fact the Tories relied on that tactic all the time. Not only had the voters caught on that they were paying increased user fees, but they'd also caught on that their municipal taxes had gone up, that municipal user fees had gone up, that school board user fees had gone up, that all sorts of things had gone up. In fact, a recent study by the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations shows that the average Ontario family ended up paying more in user fees than they got from their personal income tax cut.

These are the people who have the gall to tell us that we're not to have user fees? Give me a break.

The other thing the voters seem to understand is that, despite their reputation, the Tories can't really manage money. What did we find when we came into office? We found a \$5.6-billion deficit. When we started to look at the books, we found there was a \$100-billion deficit in infrastructure. What does that mean in real words? That means that police stations are falling apart. It means our

highways are falling apart. It means that water mains, sewers, water treatment plants and sewage treatment plants are falling apart. All sorts of public infrastructure is falling apart—another deficit they hid. In fact, the Tories added \$32 billion to the provincial debt. Think what that means. If you're adding to the provincial debt, that means you don't have a balanced budget. Now these same people are complaining that we might not have a balanced budget.

I don't know what's going to be in the budget on May 18, but I certainly know that the Balanced Budget Act, the act that belongs to the Tories and that they themselves broke, says that the party that filed the deficit budget should pay the penalty. So I wonder if, under this act, the people who were Tory cabinet ministers are willing to take a reduction in their salaries.

What I do know is that we are not going to slash and burn programs. We are going to defend public education and public health care, and we are going to make sure the services that make Ontario work are brought back to health and that we have a province that works for every Ontario citizen.

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this important discussion. I know there has been some comment by Liberal members with respect to the findings of Erik Peters following the election. With respect to that, I should point out that Mr Peters was making projections based on six months of a fiscal year in which we did promise a balanced budget. Mr Peters realized that we were no longer in office and unable to take the steps necessary to balance that budget. So in reality, his budget deficit estimate was made knowing that the Liberals were now in power and were unable or unwilling to take the steps needed to balance the books for the past fiscal year. That's the reality.

It's not surprising to me what's happening with respect to the intentions of the Liberal government. I was here as a member of the Legislature during the Peterson five-year run in government. Certainly, they deserved the inauspicious kicking in the pants that they received from the voters in 1990. Regrettably, that led us into even worse economic difficulties with an NDP government.

I think that was a major concern with respect to the days leading up to the election last year. I think within the brain trust—if you call it that—of the Liberal Party, they knew that the perception of their party with respect to management of the economy was a weakness. "How do we address that weakness? How do we persuade voters that we're not going to be the tax-and-spend Liberals that governed this province between 1985 and 1990? How can we convince them that this is a different Liberal Party; that we're going to show some fiscal responsibility; that we're not going to tax them to death; that we're not going to drive the jobs and prosperity out of this province?"

Warren Kinsella, or whomever in the back room, said, "Why don't we sign on to the Taxpayer Protection Act? Why don't we call up John Williamson, a friend of Warren's, and see if we can sign the Taxpayer Protection

Act?" That's exactly what happened. Mr Williamson was duped and, I think I have to say, somewhat of a willing dupe and, in criminal law terminology, aided and abetted what occurred with respect to the commitment made to the people of Ontario: that the Liberal government, the Liberal Party, if forming the government, would not abuse the trust of the people of the province of Ontario.

Look at quotes in the Taxpayer publication issued by the taxpayers' foundation, which has a smiling Mr McGuinty on the cover. I recognize the Speaker in the picture, the Minister of Health and Ms Brotin, who's smiling away. They're signing this big document, which we have a copy of here today, signed by Mr McGuinty on September 11, 2003: "I, Dalton McGuinty, leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario, promise that if my party is elected as the next government, I will not raise taxes or implement any new taxes without the explicit consent of Ontario voters"—that means a referendum—"and will not run deficits. I promise to abide by the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act." Signed by Dalton McGuinty, witnessed by one John Williamson, the Ontario director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation.

If you read this Taxpayer document, the December 2003 issue—and I said during question period today that Mr McGuinty's signing of this, with significant publicity and coverage around the province, was a major reason why he's sitting in that seat today, why the Liberals are in power in the province of Ontario today.

Interjections.

Mr Runciman: There are a lot of guffaws from across the way, but I believe that's the case.

If you look at the document here, in one of the articles: "The photo of the Premier signing the" taxpayer "pledge keeps appearing on television news and newspaper articles across the province. It serves as a constant reminder to voters—and the Liberal government—of the solemn promise Mr McGuinty made to the people of Ontario to not run deficits."

It goes on: "In that one act," Mr McGuinty "confronted Ontarians' greatest concern about Ontario Liberal governments—the fear of fiscal bungling." He confronted the fears, but I'm not going to use unparliamentary language. I don't want to have you rise from your place and call me to order. I think there are a whole range of issues around that promise, around that signed commitment, which is now clearly going to be broken.

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If you look at some of the press reports today with respect to how they're going to approach this, they're going to suggest that they're taking pay cuts within cabinet, and that's for the good of the country and will justify them breaking the law. Well, the reality is that most of them a few short months ago got significant increases in salary. So this is not any dramatic reduction in their salaries. That's the reality with respect to that.

But that's really a side issue. The fact is, they are breaking the law. The Attorney General, as the top justice official in the government, was asked in a scrum going into cabinet today—we respect the rules of the province

of Ontario. The government should respect the laws of the province of Ontario. What's happening here? They're clearly prepared to not respect the laws of the province of Ontario. They're clearly prepared to break the laws of the province of Ontario with respect to the Taxpayer Protection Act.

How are they going to do this? They're going to do it, we understand through media reports, by amending the legislation. So what they're going to do is change the legislation so that they can break the law. With the current wording of the law, they're effectively going to change the legislation so they can legally, in the eyes of the members of the governing party at least, break the law.

I think that is a terrible, terrible thing for this government to be doing. I think it sets a terrible precedent for any future party that governs this province. I think it sends out all of the wrong messages to the people of Ontario.

If you look back again at the election campaign and the documents that the Liberal Party produced—and I just want to put on the record again a few of the quotes attributed to Mr McGuinty, then the Leader of the Opposition. Again, I'm quoting, and I'll provide this material to Hansard afterwards: "Nothing inspires me more than the opportunity to combat the cynicism that far too many people feel about Ontario politics."

We've talked, and some other members have talked, about over 20 broken promises. But this promise with respect to a signed pledge not to run deficits, a promise to abide by the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act, I think is the most serious, the most grievous breaking of the public trust to date. I think that's why you saw the reaction in the House today of our members, who were terribly upset. I think the people of Ontario, who placed their trust in the Liberal Party of Ontario with respect to this commitment, should be terribly upset, and will be terribly upset as the days go forward and the budget is tabled on May 18.

A further quote attributed to Mr McGuinty, now the Premier, at the time:

"As we enter the next provincial election, I will have three children in university and a fourth completing high school. I find it unacceptable that their generation may be so turned off by our political system that they will virtually abandon representative democracy."

As I said earlier today, those are fine words, but I think in light of the decision to break a pledge, they are phony words. The government has to be called to account for what they are doing here. I think it is a serious matter.

What message does that send out to potential voters? Mr McGuinty is referencing his children and other young people who are growing up, looking at the political system and wondering about the process: How does that represent me? How can I trust governments? How can I trust politicians? They continue to break promises. Mr McGuinty is saying one thing in the lead-up to an election campaign, and when he takes office, the actions are fuelling cynicism, not just amongst the young, but certainly, I think, amongst the broader populace, people

who believed him when he had those television ads saying, “I will not raise your taxes,” when he signed this very solemn pledge to abide by the Taxpayer Protection Act. I think that’s a very serious matter. I think the Liberal members will rue the day the decision was taken to break the law with respect to the provisions of the Taxpayer Protection Act.

As I said, I’m not surprised by this. I’m disappointed by this. I’m disappointed in Mr McGuinty, whom I consider to be a friend and someone I’ve worked with in all of the years he has been in this Legislature, both in opposition and now in government. We served on committees together. I believe he is a sincere person, but he has been caught up in what is demanded of him as Premier and what is demanded of his government and all the pressures that any government faces on a day-to-day, week-by-week basis; they are significant and onerous.

I think Mr McGuinty, the now Premier of the province, should step back and assess what he’s doing with respect to this. He is the leader of the government. He is the leader of the province. He has made a decision. He is supporting a decision to break the law, to break this solemn promise, one he signed. It has Dalton McGuinty’s signature on this document, one that members proudly boasted about during the campaign. All of the Liberal members in the House carried it around on the campaign trail with them and boasted.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Will you mention my name so the audience will know I’m here? I don’t get to speak.

Mr Runciman: Ms Churley is here, and I’m sure she’s going to vote the right way with respect to the motion before us today.

In conclusion, this is a disappointing day. It’s disappointing for me personally with respect to my friend the Premier and the decision he has taken with respect to this law, a decision to break this law.

Again I say it’s disappointing but not surprising, because I was here before. I saw the Liberal government of the day almost double-spending in this province in five years in office: 33 tax increases during that time in office and dramatic increases in the welfare rolls during a good economy. That was the track record of the Liberal government of 1985 to 1990. Regrettably, we are following that same path today. Lessons were not learned, apparently. I didn’t say this about Peterson, but clearly this is going to be a one-term Liberal government, and deservedly so.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): The unmitigated gall of the member from Leeds-Grenville and the member from Nepean-Carleton to be lecturing anybody about integrity and to bad-mouth Erik Peters, their auditor, a man of integrity. They appointed him. To then rake him over the coals the way they did is quite shameful. But it’s part of a pattern.

My mom used to tell me when I was a kid, “When you mess up, fess up.” This government has always had trouble fessing up. In fact, in the four years I’ve been here, I can’t think of a single time when a Premier or a minister of the previous government got up and admitted

they had made a mistake—not once. Can anybody here think of one?

Interjection: They blamed everybody.

Mr McMeekin: They blamed everybody else. They had no-fault insurance: Whenever anything went wrong, it was always somebody else’s fault. It was kind of a blur-and-slur tactic: Blur your record and slur everybody else’s.

You remember health care? Blame the feds. Walker-ton? Blame the mayor or the NDP. Problems in education? Blame the teachers, the unions or the school boards. Municipal problems? Forget about downloading or explaining that, just blame the municipal politicians and bring in regulations to talk about accountability. Home care problems? My colleague from Hamilton Mountain knows the answer to that: You just fire all the CCAC folk, even though you appointed them in the first place.

Sadly, when it comes to trying to work with others to build a stronger Ontario, the previous government never seemed to miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity. There’s an old expression that goes something like this: A lie is usually halfway around the world before truth ever gets its boots on.

A case in point: According to a study of the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations that looked at the Tory tenure, the benefits to Ontario families of the tax cuts imposed by the Tory government between 1995 and 2003 were outweighed by, get this, higher user fees during the same period. The study found that a typical single-parent family with two children and an annual income of \$38,000 was paying \$1,490.43 less in income tax in 2003 than in 1995 when the Tories were first elected, but the average Ontario household was actually paying \$1,831.14 more in user fees and property taxes in 2003. So there you have it. They insist on far too strict a paradox to demand that we do the very things they promised to do, and the independent study shows they couldn’t.

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Instead of responsible, focused, visionary government when they were in power, we went through a period of wrecking-ball politics. It was like a great wagon train moving west. Whenever they hit trouble, rather than circling the wagons in defence of community to provide time for reflection, discussion and debate, they stopped only for one reason: to let people know they had reached the end of the line. They stopped to let off the disabled, the frail elderly, children with special learning needs, the sick, those with hearing problems and the poor. This was nothing short of a new form of social Darwinism. These Tories weren’t the likes of Leslie Frost or John Robarts or Bill Davis, who on most days exercised real common sense and worked in support of the common good.

Interjection: Frank Miller was OK.

Mr McMeekin: Yes, even Mr Miller. You’re right.

They were a renegade band of narrow-cast, ideological mercenaries. And having managed on one occasion to forge a consensus of the forgetful, as history will record, it wasn’t about to happen again. Remember October 2? Why? Because people began to put the pieces together.

They began to notice that something was missing from all those partisan, taxpayer-funded political ads and pamphlets.

Do you remember the clock ad that bashed teachers for not wanting to work 14 more minutes? Did that ad do anything to affirm teaching or build up our educators? Was there any mention of Walkerton in those ads? No. Was there any mention in those ads of our provincial debt skyrocketing from \$88 billion to \$114 billion? Was there any mention of financing tax cuts by borrowing \$10 billion?

Interjection: No, just, “Tax dollars working for you. Mike Harris.”

Mr McMeekin: Right on.

Did you hear anything about an added \$280,000 per hour in interest, just on the new portion of the debt they added?

Interjection: No.

Mr McMeekin: You didn't hear that?

It's a strange way to run a business, isn't it—and a government. By the way—I think we're touching a sensitive nerve here—did we hear anything in those ads about the growing gap between the richest of us and the rest of us? Nothing. How about the growing waiting lists for medical services? What about services to the disabled; welfare kids no longer able to get their teeth fixed; the abandonment of community-based addiction, mental health and counselling services? Do you remember those issues being mentioned in those ads anywhere? No, my friends, in Tory Ontario, we didn't hear any of that. Instead, we had a Premier and a government that routinely called out to the worst in us all. They appealed to our greed. They appealed to our suspicions. They appealed to our pettiness. They built themselves up by putting everybody else down. Well, some things never change. It didn't seem to matter—welfare moms, teachers, health care workers and especially those Hula Hoop nurses. Do you remember those? You get the picture.

Real leaders don't exploit fear or hate, nor pander to our worst instincts. Real leaders, people like Dalton McGuinty, try to make us better as a people than we are as individuals. Real leaders understand that you can't shake hands with a clenched fist; rather, you need to learn to dream together again, to plan together again and to work together again.

As the Dalai Lama recently reminded us, the key to happiness lies in our compassion. Our best leaders teach compassion. They're not afraid to use words like “common sense” and “compassion” in the same sentence. Great leaders and a great political party refuse to define success by how many people they can set against each other.

I want to be fair. The Tories were once a great political party. Today, they are but a shadow of their former selves. Their pre-election strategy, a feigned renewal, was too little, too late. A bend in the road doesn't have to become the end of the road if you take the turn, but you guys insisted on taking The Road Ahead, not realizing it was a dead end. You couldn't take the turn. You went off the road. And the voters, without even knowing just how really, really sad our provincial economy had been left, in a financial sense, returned only 24 Tories. I'm convinced that this number would have been halved again had the voters fully understood the real scope of the mess.

There's a lesson here for all of us, including this new government: The practice of wrecking-ball politics doesn't work any more in the province of Ontario. Fortunately, there are people all across this province who are prepared to walk through the rubble, pick up the pieces and start again.

Today, Ontario is once again a place to stand and a place to grow for everyone, not just our rich friends. Today, all over Ontario people are feeling the cool, refreshing winds of change.

Today we have a government really prepared to fix our schools, strengthen our health care and build strong, caring and sustainable local communities.

We're not out to undermine government; we're here to make it work. We're not here to bully anybody; we're here to work with everybody. We're not claiming we'll do more with less work; we're claiming we can do more with what we have if we make intelligent decisions. And rest assured we're not going to take money out of public services for all to pay for tax cuts for a few.

Our task won't be easy. The mountain is high. We're going to join hands with all Ontarians in goodwill and start that journey up, because, friends, the Ontario we can all see in our mind's eye, the one we long to leave our children and our grandchildren, that Ontario is yours and mine, ours to deliver. Let's do it.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Mr Baird has moved opposition day number 1.

All those in favour will say “aye.”

All those opposed will say—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Let's back up just a second.

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

All those in favour will say “aye.”

All those opposed will say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it. The motion is defeated.

The business being done and it being nearly 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1749.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

ERRATUM

No.	Page	Column	Line(s)	Should read:
42	1960	1	42	project, so that everybody is clear. From 1989 to 1990,

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon James K. Bartleman
 Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Alvin Curling
 Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers
 Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller
 Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman
 Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Hamilton East / Hamilton-Est	Vacant
Ancaster-Dundas-	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Hamilton Mountain	
Flamborough-Aldershot			
Barrie-Simcoe-Brampton	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative		Bountrogianni, Hon / L'hon Marie (L) Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse, ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Beaches-East York / Beaches-York-Est	Prue, Michael (ND)	Hamilton West / Hamilton-Ouest	Marsales, Judy (L)
Bramalea-Gore-Malton- Springdale	Kular, Kuldip (L)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Hon / L'hon Leona (L) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Huron-Bruce	Mitchell, Carol (L)
Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Dhillon, Vic (L)	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND)
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, Hon / L'hon John (L) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)		Milloy, John (L)
Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Sterling, Norman W. (PC)
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Lanark-Carleton	Runciman, Robert W. (PC)
Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Caplan, Hon / L'hon David (L) Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy House Leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint	Leeds-Grenville	Matthews, Deborah (L)
Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Wynne, Kathleen O. (L)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	
Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey	Eves, Ernie (PC) Leader of the opposition / chef de l'opposition	London West / London-Ouest	Bentley, Hon / L'hon Christopher (L) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Durham	O'Toole, John (PC)	London-Fanshawe	Ramal, Khalil (L)
Eglinton-Lawrence	Colle, Mike (L)	Markham	Wong, Tony C. (L)
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Hon / L'hon Steve (L) Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	Takhar, Hon / L'hon Harinder S. (L) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Erie-Lincoln	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Mississauga East / Mississauga-Est	Fonseca, Peter (L)
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Peterson, Tim (L)
Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Cansfield, Donna H. (L)	Mississauga West / Mississauga-Ouest	Delaney, Bob (L)
Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Nepean-Carleton	Baird, John R. (PC)
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Broten, Laurel C. (L)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Glenharry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Niagara Falls	Craitor, Kim (L)
Guelph-Wellington	Sandals, Liz (L)	Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Nipissing	Smith, Monique M. (L)
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Scott, Laurie (PC)	Northumberland	Rinaldi, Lou (L)
Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Oak Ridges	Klees, Frank (PC)
		Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)
		Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Stormont-Dundas- Charlottenburgh	Brownell, Jim (L)
Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	McGuinty, Hon / L'hon Dalton (L) Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Hon / L'hon Rick (L) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Watson, Hon / L'hon Jim (L) Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises	Thornhill	Racco, Mario G. (L)
Ottawa-Orléans	McNeely, Phil (L)	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	Mauro, Bill (L)
Ottawa-Vanier	Meilleur, Hon / L'hon Madeleine (L) Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones	Thunder Bay-Superior	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Oxford	Kardeman, Ernie (PC)	North / Thunder Bay-Superior-Nord	
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Hon / L'hon Gerard (L) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Ramsay, Hon / L'hon David (L) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Perth-Middlesex	Wilkinson, John (L)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre–Rosedale	Smitherman, Hon / L'hon George (L) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Peterborough	Leal, Jeff (L)	Toronto-Danforth	Churley, Marilyn (ND)
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Trinity-Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Sorbara, Hon / L'hon Greg (L) Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Yakabuski, John (PC)	Waterloo-Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Whitby-Ajax	Flaherty, Jim (PC)
Sault Ste Marie	Orazietti, David (L)	Willowdale	Zimmer, David (L)
Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Duguid, Brad (L)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Pupatello, Hon / L'hon Sandra (L) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre délégué à la Condition féminine
Scarborough East / Scarborough-Est	Chambers, Hon / L'hon Mary Anne V. (L) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités	Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Hon / L'hon Dwight (L) Minister of Energy, Chair of Cabinet, Government House Leader / ministre de l'Énergie, président du Conseil des ministres, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	York Centre / York-Centre	Kwinter, Hon / L'hon Monte (L) Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Scarborough-Agincourt		York North / York-Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
Scarborough-Rouge River	Phillips, Hon / L'hon Gerry (L) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement	York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Hon / L'hon Joseph (L) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Curling, Hon / L'hon Alvin (L) Speaker / Président	York West / York-Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
Simcoe-Grey	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)		
St Catharines	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
St Paul's	Bradley, Hon / L'hon James J. (L) Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs		
Stoney Creek	Bryant, Hon / L'hon Michael (L) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique		
	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)		

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

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

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