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of Ontario

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de l'Ontario

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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 20 May 2004

Jeudi 20 mai 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 20 May 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 20 mai 2004

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

**PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS**

ELECTION AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT
LA LOI ÉLECTORALE

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

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Pursuant
to standing order 96, Mr Patten, you have 10 minutes to
lead off.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I'm extremely
pleased and honoured this morning to be able to bring
forward my private member's Bill 76, An Act to amend
the Election Act. It is a very straightforward, simple
piece of legislation.

The bill in front of us today amends the Election Act,
and it does two things: First, it requires that a candidate's
nomination paper be accompanied by the endorsement of
the registered party; and second, it provides for the
inclusion of party affiliation on the ballot.

Many Ontarians have advocated for these changes
over the years, including past and present members of the
Ontario Legislature. In fact, the proposed changes mirror
closely the intent of a bill introduced June 11, 2003, by
Sean Conway, the former member for Renfrew-
Nipissing-Pembroke. Mr Conway's bill was not debated
because of an election call, but it was widely supported
by the members of the last Parliament, and I'm hopeful
that there will be support for this bill from all sides of the
House today. Mr Conway has said that he believes this
bill will become an important part of the democratic
reforms of our government and will champion these
initiatives and help increase voting participation. I'm
grateful for his support.

I also want to acknowledge and thank Mr Rossano
Bernardi, a recent graduate of Algonquin College and
Carleton University. He travelled by bus from Ottawa all
evening and has joined us in the gallery today. This
young gentleman sent me a letter in which he proposed
changes to the act to allow placing party affiliation on the
ballot, so I'm grateful to him. He spent a considerable

amount of time and effort researching and writing his
proposal because he firmly believes this change would
benefit our democratic system in Ontario. It's important
for us, therefore, to move forward on behalf of Rossano
and his generation.

This bill puts into action recommendations from the
standing committee on the Legislative Assembly, which
approved placing political affiliation on the ballot as far
back as 1989, almost 15 years ago. The committee's
report on election laws and process was tabled as a draft
bill and was also not debated because of an election call.
The Chief Election Officer of Ontario has tabled numer-
ous reports in the Legislative Assembly that have recom-
mended the need to include the candidate's political
affiliation on the ballot. These reports from the Chief
Election Officer have consistently said that placing
political affiliation on the ballot aids electors in making
an informed decision at the polls.

It was recommended that section 27 of the Election
Act be amended so that a candidate's political affiliation
is designated on the ballot, and to review the wording of
section 34 with regard to the form of the ballot. Today
we have an opportunity to follow these recommendations
in order to stop restricting the elector's access to basic
information about a candidate's political affiliation.

It should also be said that the electoral law of Canada
and, in effect, every province, with the exception of
Newfoundland and Ontario, provides for the political
affiliation of candidates to be listed on the ballot. Feder-
ally, amendments to the Canada Election Act in 1970
allowed the placing of political affiliations on the ballot
for all subsequent elections. The office of the Chief Elec-
toral Officer of Canada has indicated to us that these
amendments have worked well. In other provinces, such
as BC and Alberta, where we've contacted their offices
recently, the chief electoral officers indicated that placing
party affiliation on the ballot has improved clarity and
choice for voters. So, in effect, Bill 76 will ensure that
Ontario is in step with electoral practice in Canada and
our changing demographics and living patterns.

The bill is addressing many issues regarding elections
in Ontario. Bill 76 addresses the issue of confusion in
situations where candidates have a similar name or the
exact same name; placing party affiliation on the ballot
solves this problem. It acknowledges today's reality of
voter mobility. The rise of the mobile society has resulted
in people moving often and not necessarily residing in
the same riding for too long. Mobility, however, does not
change one's beliefs or one's values. Providing political
affiliation on ballots will allow them to identify with a

candidate and associate themselves with the party that they feel may best represent their views. Finally, this bill will help recent immigrants, especially those who speak different languages, to make a more informed choice at the ballot box.

I want to continue by recognizing the importance of democratic renewal in our province. As you know, our nation, a confederation, was born in 1867, based on the democratic system of responsible government, which was adopted by all of our provinces. However, there have been few changes to our democratic system since then. Parliamentary rules and the electoral system that elects the members still very much resemble those of the 19th century in Britain. Our government believes the time has come to bring these 19th-century traditions in line with the 21st century in Ontario.

1010

Today marks an important day in Ontario, one on which this democratic institution has an opportunity to improve the electoral system by ensuring that it is more clear to the people in our province. This government will propose bold initiatives to strengthen our democracy so we can improve the way it serves its citizens. Bill 76 is one small step in this process.

Let me say at this point that the minister responsible for democratic renewal, the Honourable Michael Bryant, will direct the newly created Democratic Renewal Secretariat to bring some real change in proposals to this Parliament. His parliamentary assistant, Caroline Di Cocco, will work closely with the secretariat to achieve this goal, and she will elaborate on that this morning when she speaks to this bill.

I stand today guided by the resolve of my party's commitment to improve democracy in Ontario and grateful for the unwavering leadership our Premier has shown in supporting real democratic reform. The Premier has talked about the need for better accountability, for better dialogue with Ontarians and a more transparent delivery of government services. This is democracy in action.

I will continue my remarks on a more personal basis. I know that the health of our democracy is an issue that is near and dear to the heart of each and every member in this House. I recall writing, four years ago, about my concern for the state of democracy in this place, and I'd like to quote a passage of what I wrote at the time:

"It is perhaps a measure of the well-being of our democracy that we rarely, if ever, think of it as being in any peril. By and large, we think of the health of our democratic institutions as stable and solid, if nothing else. On the rare occasions that our thoughts do such take a dark turn, we tend to imagine the loss of our democracy through a singular but cataclysmic event that would shake us to our foundations, something that would overturn our world, like an invasion or an occupation by a hostile, undemocratic enemy or a radical military coup from within. But what if our democracy started to slowly slip away in front of us and we did not even take notice?"

The reality is that the government of Ontario is less accessible and far less accountable than it was 10 years

ago or than it has been since. I'm delighted to be part of helping to propose changes. Honestly, I've been thoroughly disheartened by the reality of the state of our democracy in Ontario.

Early in my career, working with the international branch of the YMCA, I travelled and lived extensively in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, South America and the West Indies. Those travels illustrated to me the meaning of having a thriving democracy, as well as the value of keeping it healthy and vital.

Today, while on the government side, the sanctity of the democratic process is further confirmed to me. Keeping democracy healthy is something that never happens naturally or on its own. It must be nurtured and occasionally even fought for. Sometimes democracy can be seen to be slow, burdensome, a difficult exercise. Without doubt, it has its frustrations. Be that as it may, if there is a clear, indisputable responsibility for those holding office, it is to fight for a healthier democracy.

In closing, I know there are some strong defenders of the status quo. I would of course defend their right to their position and their opinions, because we need to have a full debate about democracy and its renewal. However, I hope they will eventually realize that Ontario politics, government and democracy are not working as well as they could or should be, and need change. So I say to them that we truly have an opportunity to do something for the people we serve and that these amendments will be made in the name of a better democracy. That is why I am asking all members to support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to rise to address Bill 76 in the name of the member for Ottawa Centre. I congratulate the member for bringing this bill forward, because I think it will spur some interesting debate in the Legislature this morning.

I think we all support similar themes: strengthening our democracy and strengthening the participation of citizens at the ballot box and in the electoral process. I take a different view of the means and methods of getting there, one quite contrary to the member for Ottawa Centre and the contents of Bill 76. I'll point to a couple of sections that I take particular umbrage with.

I believe that what weakens our system of democracy in Ontario and Canada is the growing strength of the leader's office and the party apparatus at the expense of the individual member. I hope that as the Attorney General moves forward on his democratic renewal process, he will choose to strengthen the role of individual MPPs and their ability to represent the constituents of their ridings and to express a greater latitude in their views than what comes out of the Premier's office or out of cabinet, and that then, in turn, the Attorney General would try to take steps away from the growing strength of the party apparatus in the leader's office.

I fear that Bill 76 takes us in the opposite direction, for a couple of reasons. First and foremost, the amended section 27 of the Election Act, further amended by section 9.2 of Bill 76, would have the party's leader

endorse a particular candidate. I think this is tremendously dangerous. We see it happening right now at the federal level, with Paul Martin appointing a series of candidates or threatening to appoint candidates in various ridings. I don't think that plays well with the themes of democracy, and it has caused many problems.

There's an article from British Columbia: "Grumbling grows for Martin's Recent Practice of Appointing Candidates in British Columbia." A Toronto Star editorial of April 26 says, "The riding executive makes a legitimate point in describing the appointment as undemocratic. Citizens in any riding should have the right to choose their candidate. If Cunningham"—one of the leading Paul Martin acolytes in British Columbia who's been appointed to run by the Prime Minister—"is the best person for the job, why is he shying away from competing against Kuo and Lee on his own merits?" The Star goes on to say, "This process subverts grassroots democracy. It is, therefore, incumbent upon all parties to fix the flaws in the nomination process."

So I strongly reject the notion of having the party leader sign off on individual candidates in the riding, which Bill 76, if I read it correctly, purports to do.

There's a recent lesson too in Hamilton East. I expect there has been debate within the Liberal caucus office, after a couple of drinks in the evening, when members can sometimes be a bit more honest with themselves. I was in that room myself not too long ago.

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: Sure. Sometimes we have those discussions late at night, and you say, "Did we make the right decision?" In Hamilton East, McGuinty and the geniuses in the Premier's office appointed Mr Agostino despite the fact that there were other Liberals who were interested in running. You can't argue that he anointed the candidate, and that was an issue in Hamilton East. I heard when I was knocking on doors, and you certainly saw in newspaper coverage, that there was some upset in Hamilton, on top of the Sheila Copps-Valeri debacle, that they didn't like the way the candidate was appointed by the leader's office. I think it is tremendously dangerous, and a local candidate should be on the ballot by his or her own merits in winning the party's nomination.

Of course there's the sad saga of Rob Foster in the town of Lincoln, a candidate who wanted to run for the provincial Liberals in 2003 in the riding of Erie-Lincoln as my opponent and was basically told, if I recall the story correctly, either by the leader or the Liberal Party of Ontario, that they had another favoured candidate and threatened to veto.

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): How do you know all this?

Mr Hudak: I am quite confident that my sources are correct. Rob Foster chose not to run, in favour of Vance Badawey, the eventual candidate. My view is that the local Liberals should have chosen their candidate. That's why I have great concern about that particular section.

Hon Mr Gerretsen: How were you chosen? Tell us how you were chosen.

Mr Hudak: I ran a competitive race and was fortunate enough to win the nomination in 1995, and—

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: You're getting me off my script here. John Fairlie, an accountant in Wainfleet, was the individual in that nomination.

Do you know what? I think there's a lot more we can do to strengthen the role of MPPs. The American and British systems, warts and all, I think members would agree, have a greater latitude for individual members to stray from the party line coming from the leader's office. Under the British system, with a larger number of members of Parliament and fewer cabinet positions on a per capita basis, members have a greater individualist streak in Great Britain. I think that's healthy, and I hope that if we do make changes to our electoral process here in Ontario, we'll do more to strengthen the individualism of MPPs of all three parties.

1020

Hon Mr Gerretsen: Hear, hear.

Mr Hudak: There we go.

The notion, therefore, of having the leader of the party sign off on the ballot and then putting the party on the ballot as well, I think, takes us away from grassroots democracy. The more we can do to strengthen the name and the role of an individual MPP so that when citizens are casting their ballots, whether it is in Beamsville or in Kingston and the Islands, they'll be voting for Mr Gerretsen or his opponents as opposed to voting for a Liberal Party or a leader—the more we can do to strengthen the local candidate's name and choice on the ballot, the better it is for democracy in Ontario and in our country, Canada. That's why, while I commend the member for Ottawa Centre for bringing this forward, I strongly reject this notion of strengthening the party and the leader's office at the expense of individual MPPs and individual choice for a candidate at the local level.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): I am pleased to stand today to speak on Bill 76 that the member from Ottawa Centre, Richard Patten, has brought forward. I have to say that that member has been, for the time I've known him in opposition, an incredible voice for the ideals of our parliamentary system and for democracy in Ontario. One of the first discussions I had with Richard Patten had to do with democratic protection and enhancement of our system, and the ideas he brought forward in a paper I know, as parliamentary assistant, certainly are in the mix of the progress we're going to be making to enhance this Parliament and this Legislature.

It is important that the voters have an opportunity to know the different aspects of the candidates when they go in to vote. I think that is what the intent here is, that the voting public has the best information about the candidate when they go in to vote.

Our Election Act is 30 years old and needs a great deal of revamping. I believe that in the last election there was a list of candidates and the parties, but it was put outside the voting booth; it wasn't on the ballot. So there is a need that we put on the ballot not only the name of the

person but also what flag they are flying under when it comes to the party. The philosophy of the party will also impact and give an indication to the voter of the views or the general philosophy they have.

I've heard many people say that parliamentary democracy is tremendously flawed, but then the other part is "until we take a look at everything else that's out there." Parliamentary democracy is an important part of what I call good government. That's what helps to develop good government.

Our government has, in this mandate, put together a secretariat. That secretariat is going to be an ongoing enhancer of our democratic system. Yes, we do need to have a promoting of a stronger system here in Ontario. Again, it's ongoing. It is about more accountability. It is about the role we have as private members in this House, which is three-pronged: It is about our role of representing our constituents, which is important to each member in this Legislature; it is about the legislative role we have to better promote the issues that are dear and near to our hearts, such as the member from Ottawa Centre has done today; and then there is the scrutiny role on behalf of the people of Ontario, a scrutiny role that each one of us brings to bear on the executive in government. That is how come our parliamentary democracy is held as one of the best democracies in the world.

In enhancing the role of the private member, it's important that we develop a standard in this House. I say this because I was probably at the depths of my despair when I saw the budget being taken outside of this place. I felt it was undermining the whole understanding of what democracy is about, about the people's representatives being able to scrutinize how the people's money is being spent. To me, that was another erosion of democracy, which we must protect at all cost.

One of the important parts of our role in this House is on committees. There's a lot of work that needs to be done to change the culture of sometimes very parochial debate that I see, to be able to raise the standard of debate in this House so that we can actually discuss, with intelligence and substance, those things that are important to the constituents we are here to serve. Too many times, we have had a culture that has probably undermined that process.

I would like to say that this bill is a step toward enhancing democracy, but we also need to do so much more. Speaker, how does one change a culture of how things are done? You know, in your chair, that there are many times when there is disrespect for the work that's done here. The way we conduct ourselves in this House provides a view to the citizens about the type of work we do. It also enhances or deteriorates the credibility of who we are as the people's representatives here.

In the time I have, I would like to talk about the bigger picture of what democratic renewal is about. It's about trying to restore a sense of trust, integrity and ethics in how we conduct ourselves. Those are the altruistic reasons why we have to change the culture here. I would suggest we sometimes get involved in some inappropriate

behaviour. I'm sure that when the students come in here they say to themselves, "Is this how our representatives behave?"

In conclusion, I would like to say that I am really pleased to speak in favour of this bill. I do believe it will do a great deal to provide good information to our voters.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm very pleased to join the debate today with respect to the member Mr Patten's bill to amend the Election Act. Having run and been elected three times, I certainly know a little bit about how the ballot can be configured, if you wish, in terms of people coming in.

I remember running in 1999. An individual by the name of Tracogna came in at about the last minute, obviously supported by a union—he was a union business agent. I don't even believe he resided in the riding, but he came in, came up with some kind of address they accepted and ended up on the ballot. My name is Tascona and the other person's name was Tracogna. I can tell you we weren't too happy about that, but there wasn't anything we could do about it. So I guess dealing with making the ballot fair is an issue, but there are people who can come in. If you wanted Jim Gerretsen to run against John Gerretsen down in Kingston and the Islands, I guess that could happen. What's the solution?

I can tell you that this bill deals with much more than putting the party banner beside your name. This bill is an erosion of my rights as an MPP. It increases the power of the leader. It smacks of the federal system. Quite frankly, I'm outraged because of what I've seen coming out of the federal Liberal party, with respect to their appointment of people parachuted into ridings because the leader wants them.

1030

What we have here, under section 9, basically makes sure that's the system we're going to be inheriting. I'll read it for the listening public to see what kind of democracy this is. This erodes the members' power and increases the power of the leader. It says:

"(9.1) Where the candidate, with his or her consent, has received the endorsement of a registered party, the nomination paper shall be accompanied by a statement certifying that the candidate has been endorsed by the party."

Fair enough. Fair enough that they know you're a member of a particular party.

It goes on to say:

"(9.2) The statement referred to in subsection (9.1) must be signed by the party leader as registered under clause 10(3)(c) of the Election Finances Act or by his or her agent."

What that is leading to basically is that if you want to run for any party, you'd better have that signature of your leader. Right now, we don't have that, and I don't support what is going on here.

Hon Mr Gerretsen: You don't have that?

Mr Tascona: The member from Kingston and the Islands is mouthing off on the other side as I'm trying to speak.

I think this is a fundamental issue of democracy in terms of the party process. It has nothing to do with this place; this has to do with nomination and fairness with respect to the person who wants to run, regardless of what the party apparatus thinks of that individual. What happened to fairness in the nomination?

When I was studying politics at McMaster University for four years, we talked about the party elite—this was back in the early 1970s—how they take over the nomination process and how it's an elitist system. An elitist system is basically created where the party apparatus says to people, "You're not going to be running. We don't care whether you're a good Liberal or not; you're not going to be running here because we want Joe Blow to run. He has been doing things for us, and we think he's a better candidate than you. We've done polling and we think that person should be there. We don't care what you've done in the riding. We don't even care whether you live in the riding or whether you've done anything for this riding. We're here in Toronto, at Queen's Park, and because we're the power, we think Joe Blow should be running."

A classic situation—and I have nothing against the man—is Ken Dryden. He just got appointed to run in York Centre—a good candidate. I know Art Eggleton was running. He had the nomination and he decided to step aside. They just shoved someone in and appointed him. I don't know whether he even lives in the riding. I think fundamental politics and democracy are that if you live in the riding, if you support that party, you should be allowed to run for that nomination—no questions asked. What I see here—and it should be under the title "restriction," where it says "signed by the party leader."

I say to Mr Patten: Where are you getting this from? Why is this coming out? I don't see anything democratic about this. I think it's kowtowing to the leader. I'll say this to my leader: If they think I need his signature to run, I'll run as an independent. I don't care. There are other people around here who would probably run as independents too, if they say, "Oh, I have to have your signature to run." After having gotten the support of the nomination from the people within the riding in a fair, democratic process, they're saying, "We don't want you to run. I'm not going to sign your papers if you run and win."

That's what happens out there. That's why you get people appointed. That's why people turn off the system at the local level. I can tell you, there are a lot of green-horns around here on the Liberal side. You just wait until they turn on you and say, "You should have voted on that bill, buddy. You should have been there for us on that. You lose your PA." They don't want you to run next time. You can laugh all you want, but that's reality. That is the reality of how the party apparatus runs.

Hon Mr Gerretsen: Is that what happened?

Mr Tascona: Like the member for Kingston and the Islands—he's just happy. I was with him when we used to go up north and do hearings, and we were doing a lot more hearings than the members are doing now. But I

can tell you I have real difficulties with that part of the bill.

The other part of it, in terms of putting down party affiliation—I've run three times. I haven't run with any party affiliation. I've run on my own name and whatever. People knew who I was running for. But the bottom line is, you can have some issues. There's no doubt, if someone puts another candidate there—with the same name, certainly—you may want to look and say, "Maybe the party affiliation can be in there." But you could get games within the party affiliation. You could have the Liberal Party put down as a candidate for that, and then you could have something that would maybe be mirroring close to that—easier with respect to the Progressive Conservative Party, because you could have someone put down as the Conservative Party, depending on what the name games become. That's what the nonsense becomes.

This doesn't enhance democracy. I don't know why Mr Patten is putting this forth. Quite frankly, the way I look at it, if you're running and your name is on that ballot, that should be good enough. I've run municipally and I've run provincially. For him to say, "OK, we want to make sure you've got the party affiliation right beside there," to me smacks of—dealing with the Liberals these days, something's up here. Something is definitely up with respect to wanting to change the ballot system we've had for many years.

I can tell you, Mr Speaker, that there's something fundamentally wrong here with respect to democracy, where you can't run unless the leader signs your papers. That's what I object to with respect to this bill. I also wonder why we now want to change the ballot that has always been in place. These are fundamental issues that have been going on. Anyone who has been involved in party politics for years—we're probably going to be put in a situation very shortly, if we decide to adopt the federal riding boundaries. I put that to the members right now. If we adopt the federal riding boundaries, you're going to see a number of individuals from within the same party facing off with each other because their boundaries cross. The most famous ones who went at it were Sheila Copps and Tony Valeri. There was also John Bryden in Hamilton, in that particular area, and I think down in Niagara, and there are other areas that are going to cross over. You're going to have situations where the leader says, "No, I'm not going to sign your papers. I want Gerretsen to run. You run somewhere else." That's the problem with respect to that situation.

Maybe this is leading up to the changing of the boundaries. Maybe Mr Patten is ahead of us here. He's setting the table to make sure that the leader has the control over the system, with the blessing of the party.

I don't know why a private member is coming forth with this bill anyway. We've been promised a package of democratic renewal by the Attorney General for ages. Where is it? It's not here. We've got a member coming forth here who I would say is walking in lockstep with the leadership, making sure that the leaders are even stronger than they need to be. God knows, they're strong

enough as it is in terms of determining all the policy within this place, but to say, "I can't run unless the party leader signs my nomination papers"—I can't think of anything that's more offensive to the democratic process and the nomination process that we have in this province. When those boundary changes come and you say, "Oh, jeez, now I'm into someone else's area," don't feel so smug over there that you've got your seat, because you may not have your seat. You may be looking for another area. It may not be that easy in terms of making sure that you can get that nomination, especially if the leader won't sign your papers and says, "You'd better get over to another area; otherwise, you're not running. Thanks for your service for the last four years, and adios."

Mr Patten has put forth a bill here that I don't support. I hope nobody supports it. If you want your leader to determine your political future, you can't run and speak your mind in this House without putting your future in jeopardy come ballot time, the next time you go for the normal nomination. With respect to the party affiliation on the ballot, that has got to be looked at a lot closer, to make sure there is no gerrymandering, no situations where the public is misrepresented. The only way I can see that there's no misrepresentation is if they know who's on the ballot and they know who they're voting for.

1040

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I come to this debate with very mixed feelings about this bill, I have to tell you. There is no question that the voters have a right to know every aspect about the person who will represent them in this Legislature. They have a right to know where they live, they have a right to know their political views, they have a right to hear them, they have a right to read the literature and they also, I would suggest, have a right to know which party they represent. In that regard, this is a good thing that is being put on the ballot. It will also, I think, limit the confusion. The confusion almost always—I can't even think of a case when it hasn't revolved around the Liberal Party, because what you see is case after case of parachuted candidates who cause turmoil within the riding association, who then run as independent Liberals. I think the most clear one we saw in the last provincial election happened in Scarborough Centre in the celebrated case of Mr Duguid versus Mr Manios, which, had it not been such an overwhelming Liberal majority elected, certainly would have cost Mr Duguid and the Liberal Party that seat.

We also see that there is the problem of putting the onus on the party to act fairly, and I think this is probably the Achilles heel of this particular bill. It will vest more power in the leader and more power in the party apparatus at the upper levels to determine who gets the nod and who does not get the nod; who gets their nomination form signed and who does not. Quite frankly, I think it takes away democracy from the local riding associations.

So there are good aspects to the bill and bad aspects to the bill. I would suggest, though, that this bill isn't in

fact—and I know Mr Patten has been wanting this bill for a long time. It is premature, given the commitment of the Premier and the Liberal Party in the last election to thoroughly look at how democracy takes place in this Legislature and in this province. There is a promise here of democratic reform. There is a promise here that the Attorney General will be going out to the people and we'll be seeing mechanisms that will help make this Legislature more democratic and give greater power to individual members and to the electorate that sends them here.

We need to see the entire package. This, in fact, may be one small part of the package, and, depending on how the package unfolds, it may be a good part. But we need, first of all, to underline that we respect democracy in this province.

I want to tell you—and I'm delighted that the Minister of Municipal Affairs is here today—one of the saddest days I have experienced in this Legislature was the day that the Minister of Municipal Affairs refused to recognize the democratic will of the people of Kawartha Lakes. Those people had gone through great and terrible expense and a lot of time in order to exercise their rights as electors and their rights as free and democratic people in this province. They went to the Legislature and they got the approval of the Legislature and the approval of the then Minister of Municipal Affairs to put a ministerial-sanctioned question on the municipal ballot. That question was approved, first of all, by the minister. Then it was vetted by the "yes" and "no" sides, who agreed on the actual wording. It was put on the municipal ballot. There were monies allowed for both sides to get their message out. The people in Kawartha Lakes voted in a democratic fashion, a great many turned out to vote, and the majority voted that they wanted to de-amalgamate their forced city.

After having gone through that entire process, they came to the minister with the results, only to have the minister say that it would cost too much money. With the greatest of respect, if the democracy of the people of this province is not respected, I don't know how any other democratic reform that is being suggested can possibly hold any water.

I went down to meet some of those people in Kawartha Lakes who had come together with people from across Ontario, people from Ottawa and Sudbury, Toronto, Flamborough, Dundas, Aldershot, and other locations as well, and there was a sense of frustration in the room. They felt that the people are not being listened to by their politicians when initiatives are put forward, when they want to have referenda, when they want to be able to have a say on how they are governed or the forms in which they are governed at a municipal level. They are simply roughshod told that it cannot happen. I hope that when the minister comes forward with his new bill that the actual democracy at the local level will be paramount.

Of course, this bill is here because there are problems with independent Liberals. I have already alluded to the great battle of Duguid versus Manios. But this again was

caused by the appointment of Mr Duguid over Mr Manios, who had for several years been signing up members, who had the support of his local riding association, who had been the previous candidate, and who saw himself shunted aside. He was not willing to accept that.

The same thing happens in other ridings and quite conceivably could happen in almost any riding. We saw what happened in Hamilton East; that has already been spoken to. There was no chance, quite literally, for people who were unhappy there to run as independent Liberals, because the nominations were closed and an hour later the by-election was called. There was no chance for the dissidents to organize.

Now, we do know that the party name on the ballot, would solve the age-old problem that we see not so much in Ontario but in Quebec, and that is people running with the same names. It is not and has not been unusual in Quebec to see people with identical names on the ballot, with nothing to differentiate, in the past, which party they belonged to or whether one was an independent and one was running on behalf of a party. It was very common to find that someone with an identical name was brought in to run in those circumstances.

Also, in Toronto we saw an incumbent, Mr Peter Tabuns, who is presently the NDP representative federally in the riding that I represent, lose the municipal election when a person was parachuted in with the name Larry Tabin and was able to garner off just the number of votes to make sure that he lost the seat. That's in the days when the top two were elected. He came third, and Larry Tabin had more than sufficient votes to have made up the difference.

I have to go back to the problem here. The problem is that the leader's signature will give even more authority to the leader to parachute candidates, and we have seen the Liberals very famous for that both federally and provincially. I might suggest, if this were to pass today, that you may want to amend it or have it amended in committee to include the president of the local riding association "in conjunction with"—and both signatures must be on there—the leader or agent. Because if you leave it solely in the hands of the leader and/or his or her agent, then you are going to set up a system that we are trying to get away from.

The real problems here, I would suggest, which must be dealt with by the Attorney General, are proportional representation and the freedom of members of this House to vote however they wish except in matters of confidence and the budget, so that it doesn't matter if you vote against your party; the government would not fall, and you would see a great many backbench government members not toeing the party line, especially on bad law. We need to give power to our committees, and most of all we need to give power to the democratic nomination process that would render all of this somewhat moot.

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): C'est avec plaisir que je viens appuyer mon collègue d'Ottawa-Centre et un projet de loi qui ne fait certainement pas sa première apparition dans cette assemblée.

Nous sommes maintenant plus de 12,5 millions de citoyens et citoyennes en Ontario. Nous avons beaucoup de nouveaux arrivés. Les nouveaux arrivés ne connaissent pas toujours les candidats locaux, nouveaux arrivés, parfois, qui ne parlent que la langue russe, asiatique, arabe, qui ne peuvent pas lire notre langue canadienne.

Laissez-moi vous dire que j'ai vécu l'expérience personnellement dans le passé lorsque les mêmes noms ont apparu sur le bulletin. En 1999, par exemple, mon opposant était un autre Lalonde, et on était censé avoir un troisième Lalonde sur le bulletin. Mais dans ce temps-là j'ai approché le directeur en chef d'Élections Ontario pour regarder s'il n'y avait pas une possibilité de rajouter le nom du parti. Il m'a dit, « Monsieur Lalonde, ne procédez pas à changer votre nom », parce que j'étais sur le point de faire changer mon nom à Jean-Marc Libéral Lalonde. Nous savons que chacun des partis politiques a un programme. Les nouveaux arrivés en Ontario qui ne connaissent pas les candidats vont se baser sur le programme électoral du parti.

1050

J'ai vécu de belles expériences aussi dans la dernière élection. Sur la frontière de deux circonscriptions, j'avais un Lalonde sur le côté de Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh et j'avais un Lalonde sur l'autre côté de la rue, qui était moi. Je peux dire que, du fait qu'on n'avait pas le nom du parti sur le bulletin, j'étais avantagé parfois, et c'était parfois désavantageux.

Laissez-moi vous dire que j'ai eu la chance de voyager à travers le monde comme observateur d'élections. La dernière observation pour laquelle j'étais envoyé par les Nations Unies avec une équipe de résidents de différents pays, je me suis rendu au Cambodge. Au Cambodge, nous avions 43 partis politiques. Ce n'est pas les noms des candidats qui apparaissent sur les bulletins, ce sont les noms des partis, puisque les gens ne peuvent pas connaître les candidats.

Mais nous ici, on devrait regarder peut-être un peu différemment.

J'ai de bons exemples ici qui démontrent que parfois nous ajoutons le logo du parti en plus du nom du parti, qui est en caractères gras, et le nom du candidat, qui apparaît en caractères très petits. En plus de ça, nous rajoutons la photo du candidat, parce que parfois les candidats vont cogner de porte en porte et on ne peut pas se rappeler le nom du parti. Mais encore une fois, la grande importance de ça, c'est la plateforme, les politiques du parti, qui compte.

En 1999, lorsqu'est survenue l'élection, on m'a dit, « Jean-Marc, tu vas faire face encore cette fois-ci à deux autres Lalonde. Il faudra participer le plus tôt possible à apporter des changements à l'Assemblée législative. » Savez-vous, monsieur le Président, que nous sommes la seule province au Canada où le nom du parti politique n'apparaît pas sur le bulletin? Aussi récemment qu'hier, nous avons fait des recherches. Nous sommes la seule province au Canada où le nom du parti n'apparaît pas sur le bulletin.

Nous avons même la région du Yukon, qui n'est pas une province, mais un territoire: le nom du parti apparaît sur le bulletin. Les deux seuls autres territoires qui n'ont pas le nom du parti, c'est parce que nous n'avons pas de parti politique à l'intérieur de ces deux territoires. Ce sont le territoire du Nord-Ouest et le territoire du Nunavut. Ce sont les deux seuls dans le Canada actuellement qui n'ont pas le nom du parti sur le bulletin.

Mais j'ai été plus loin. Lorsque je me suis rendu au Vermont, aux États-Unis, on m'a démontré que oui, encore là, le nom du parti apparaît très clairement sur le bulletin. J'ai regardé en Australie, par exemple : le nom du parti apparaît plus gras que le nom du candidat. Si je regarde un pays asiatique, nous avons encore là le nom du parti qui apparaît.

Puis, pourquoi ici en Ontario ne pouvons-nous pas avoir le nom du parti?

J'ai été encore plus loin. Sur 62 pays que j'ai ici devant moi, tous les noms des partis apparaissent en premier lieu au lieu de celui du candidat, ce qui démontre encore clairement l'importance que le citoyen, le votant, va aller appuyer la politique d'un parti. Si je regarde ici-même à Toronto, nous avons parfois quatre ou cinq circonscriptions différentes qui font face à une autre circonscription. Je pourrais vous raconter très longuement de mon expérience dans le passé, mais je vais donner la chance à d'autres de mes collègues.

Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I'm proud today to stand in support of Bill 76 and to support my colleague from Ottawa Centre. A question was put forth in the House today as to why Mr Patten was putting forth this bill. Well, first of all, Mr Patten has a bright idea. He has a bright idea that builds on what we campaigned on, that being democratic renewal.

He also presented something in the House today that builds on something that I, throughout my career in education, supported and encouraged in young people, and especially students. When my colleague from Ottawa Centre today introduced Mr Bernardi to the House, it was exciting to see education in action, from a proposal that he put forth that the member from Ottawa Centre could bring into the House. I saw exactly what I had encouraged my students to do.

Before I forget, I would like to say too that I am giving a minute of my time to my colleague opposite from Lanark-Carleton.

I would also like to say that the amendments to section 27 in the bill seem to have created a little consternation and some problems across the House here. The member from Erie-Lincoln mentioned that there's danger in this section. I see no danger at all. This bill has nothing to do with the nomination process, a process that I remember going through in November 2001, when I would have been excited and proud to have had my leader's endorsement on the nomination paper. It's just asking for a signature on the paper. I don't see it as any more than that. It endorses. It doesn't reflect in any way on a process to get there.

I also would like to say that with regard to this being premature—this was a comment by the member for Beaches-East York—I don't think it's premature at all. We did announce in the election campaign that we wanted democratic renewal. It has already been mentioned in the House by the Honourable Michael Bryant and by his parliamentary assistant, Caroline Di Cocco, from Sarnia-Lambton, and we will bring into this House the processes that will make it very clear how we want to reform democracy in this province.

If I have anything to say here, I'm proud of the fact that the member from Ottawa Centre has jumped the queue a bit, jumped into the process and given this House the chance to vote and express their thoughts on a bill that's going to modernize democracy. It's going to give a chance to those people, for example, in Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, who had confusion in the last election. We just had that mentioned here by the honourable member and my colleague from across the boundary, from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh. There was confusion there, and this will eliminate the confusion. With the name and the party on the ballot, it will eliminate that confusion.

I'm very happy to support this. I'm very happy that we had input from a constituent in this province who took the time, and I encourage other constituents to take the time, to bring something positive before their member to have endorsed here in the House.

I would like to conclude by saying that I support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Just a tiny bit of housekeeping: Do we have unanimous consent for the member for Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh to give a minute to the member from Lanark-Carleton? Agreed. Thank you.

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): Thank you very much. I appreciate the bipartisan offer.

I want to indicate my support for Mr Patten's bill. This is not a new idea. This is an idea that has been around a long time. Face it, folks: People in this province and in Canada vote first on the basis of a leader; second, on the basis of a party; and third, on the basis of the candidate. We'd all like to believe that they're voting for Norm Sterling, Richard Patten or whoever.

The only way you can find out the party affiliation is to go and look at a list and then match the name with the list. This is about information, informing the voter as to who he's electing and what party he's affiliated with. Therefore, I support the bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Mr Patten, you have two minutes to reply.

1100

Mr Patten: I want to thank everybody who participated in this debate this morning. I'd like to thank my colleagues for their support and for the points that were raised.

There was a point raised relating to the authorization of the party leader, or his or her agent. This is already required under the Election Finances Act, so it doesn't change anything.

What some members seem to be concerned about is when leaders have the opportunity to nominate members in their particular parties. Some parties have it; some don't. We have a very limited access, where our leader has the opportunity to do that in five ridings only, and for other parties it's all ridings etc.

What this is attempting to do is that if we're going to have party affiliation on the ballot, we have that authorized by the party, by an authorized signatory. It could be the leader or his or her agent. The member for Beaches-East York suggested that perhaps it should be the leader and the president of the party. I like that suggestion. I have no trouble with that suggestion. That would be a very good suggestion that I would certainly entertain in committee that might deal with the worry or the fear.

However, having studied the bill, having looked at this, this does not add anything new to the act. It's just that when you put a party affiliation down, how do you distinguish between people saying, "I'm running for the New Democrats," and "No, I'm running for the New Democrats"? Obviously, we need to have somebody with authority in the party as a signatory and who can speak on behalf of the party, and that is the leader or his or her agent. That's all that really is. So some of the cynicism about this propagating some sense of strengthening the leader's role really does not hold water upon examination.

I want to wind up by saying that for sure this is simply a small step along the bigger and longer road to democratic reform, but I hope the House might consider this as a signal that we collectively support democratic reform, and one way in which we can do that is by supporting this bill today.

KEVIN'S LAW (CHILD AND FAMILY
SERVICES STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT), 2004

LOI KEVIN DE 2004 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES SERVICES
À L'ENFANCE ET À LA FAMILLE

Mr Jackson moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 78, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act and the Coroners Act to better protect the children of Ontario / Projet de loi 78, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille et la Loi sur les coroners pour mieux protéger les enfants de l'Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr Jackson, you have 10 minutes to lead off.

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): Today is an important day. Private members' time is the time when we as MPPs have an opportunity to express strong feelings about issues that are of concern to us and, in particular, of concern to our constituents. Members of the House will know that for my 20 years here, I've had occasion to sit in this position and present bills of justice

reform and victims' rights on at least 20 different occasions.

Today, I'm proud to present this amendment to the Child and Family Services Act and the Coroners Act. However, as in every other case, I wish I wasn't presenting this bill. I wish Ontario was as safe as it could be for children and those in care in this province and that this bill was not necessary. However, the tragic events of earlier this year and late last year have necessitated coming forward with this bill.

Members have a copy of the bill. It's on record. They will know that should this bill pass, there will be an automatic coroner's inquest when a child dies from a Criminal Code offence while in the care of a parent who is or has been the subject of supervised access. The bill will also specifically permit the use of the victims' justice fund to cover the costs of legal counsel for the crime victim's family at any one of these inquests.

Earlier today, the mother of Kevin Latimer, Jenny Latimer; her mother, Marjorie Latimer, Kevin's grandmother; and their spiritual counsel, Canon Michael Bird of St Luke's Anglican Church, delivered a letter to the Premier's office expressing concerns and the importance of proceeding with this bill. They are present in the House today, for the members; they wished to be here. Kevin's grandfather, Kevin Latimer, and his brother, Liam, are watching today's proceedings on television.

Kevin Latimer was just three days short of his second birthday when he died in his sleep on February 2, 2004. It was a quiet end to a troubled life. Five months earlier, Kevin plunged out of a third-storey window of his father's apartment. He landed broken and crunched on a patch of earth below. His spinal cord was injured. The toddler would never walk again. Only his spirits weren't broken as he clung on to life. His father is charged with criminal negligence causing bodily harm and will appear in Hamilton court on June 15.

During the spring of 2002, shortly after Kevin was born, Jenny Latimer took her sons, Liam and Kevin, to Halton Women's Shelter. According to Jenny, "We had been living with constant verbal, emotional and physical abuse from the boys' father. He had even threatened my life and it was time to get the boys to safety." Kevin's father has also been charged with four counts of assault and one count of uttering threats, and in July a judge in Halton will hear those charges.

When Jenny first made her application to the courts to protect her children and herself, the father was granted supervised access. Within a few months, however, this order was changed to grant supervised access outside the jurisdiction where the mother and family live. The family has been devastated by the tragic loss of such an innocent and loving child, and they are confused and angry at a court system and a child protection system that, in their opinion, did not protect them. They want answers to questions and, I stress, most of all they do not want any other family to have to experience this pain and horror.

The purpose of a coroner's inquest is to give a voice to the departed. This bill will also give a voice to the family.

I wish to put on the record some of the comments of the impact statement from the family. Jenny Latimer wrote:

“My name is Jenny Latimer and I am a 24-year-old mom who gave birth to two beautiful and healthy boys. Last summer we had many laughs. We shared incredible treasured memories: Kevin’s first step, Liam’s first time catching a fish....”

These were all important moments in this family, as they started.

“During the spring of 2002, shortly after Kevin was born, Liam and Kevin and I went to a shelter for abused mothers and their children. We had been living with constant verbal, emotional and physical abuse from the boys’ father. He had even threatened my life and it was time to get my boys to safety.

“A few months later, along with the Children’s Aid Society recommendations, the father was granted an unsupervised visitation with the boys. He was to attend a six-week men’s group for anger management and have a psychiatric evaluation. It was alleged to have been completed mid-December 2002. January 2003, he started, slowly, having unsupervised visits....

“Kevin fell out of his father’s attic apartment window through a broken screen. We later learned that both my boys had been seen on numerous occasions throwing clothing through the tattered screen, with no signs of their father. Neighbours had warned him of the danger. I had no knowledge of these events until after the accident occurred.... Liam saw Kevin fall from the window. He laid on the gravel below, conscious and crying and Liam saw this. Liam, to this day, constantly speaks about Kevin falling out of the window. He has been traumatized by what he has seen. This is too much for any child, let alone a four-year-old boy.

“Kevin fractured his neck in two place and he suffered a spinal cord injury. He was paralyzed from the neck down with some shoulder movement and elbow movement, but had no feeling. We could not or did not want to believe that Kevin would never walk again,” and the mother dedicated every hour to his rehabilitation. He remained in hospital until a week before Christmas, when he finally was able to be brought home.

“Kevin touched many hearts. This law will continue to touch many more and continue to make his mommy proud.

“I love my children with all my heart. Unfortunately, nothing will bring my precious child back but Kevin’s Law can stop the hurt from happening to other children. We cannot allow innocent children to be hurt any more. Kevin’s Law will save lives.”

That was from Jenny Latimer, mother of Kevin Latimer.

The other thing this bill will do, besides addressing the issues of concern the family has raised, is that it will give those families standing, with funding from the victims’ justice fund, before a coroner’s inquest, and this is very important. It is the spirit of this legislation that was brought in by our government, and which I first tabled in this House back in 1988 when Ian Scott was our Attorney

General of the day. Bill 78 would specifically permit the use of the victims’ justice fund to ensure that families of victims with standing in an inquest are able to have funded counsel.

1110

We have a superb tradition in Ontario of inquests delving into systemic issues that contribute to the deaths of individuals, and consequential recommendations coming from those inquests have helped make our province and country a safer place to live in. Too often in the past, while public agencies involved are present with publicly funded counsel, victims’ families are forced to scrape together money to participate effectively. It is a gross injustice to inflict such a burden on the people whose family member died and from whose death we seek knowledge for the public good. Bill 78 will end that injustice once and for all.

I say with all sincerity to my friend the current Attorney General of Ontario, who himself has a deserved reputation as an advocate for victims of crime, to put this money to the use that was intended, so it is helping crime victims and not sitting in a bank account while victims need help. So many times in the past, he and his party, and all members of this House, have spoken of the need to improve support and assistance for victims in our province. I urge all members to support Bill 78, as this will ensure standing for these families. It will allow the funds from the justice fund to be dedicated to their essential initial purposes as designed by legislators and approved in this House.

This is a very difficult issue in our community, because Kevin went through such tragedy for the four and a half months he clung to life. The family has been through an awful lot, and there are many questions. This bill is not about a witch hunt of the children’s aid society or any other group. Children’s aid has struggled under budget constraints and various other challenges, and we want to support our children’s aids in Ontario. However, there are so many questions that remain unanswered in this case. We are hopeful that through this legislation we will be able to have a coroner’s inquest.

I look forward to the debate in the House this morning, and I encourage all members to open their hearts and support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I appreciate the opportunity to debate Bill 78. From the onset, I think it would be very appropriate to indicate my support for the bill and make it very clear that the member’s reputation is well known. I spoke with the member and was very glad to hear that it was a very specific and well-written bill that speaks to the issue of child protection. I want to compliment the member on the fact that it is doing that.

The second thing I want to do—actually I should have done it first—is offer my sympathies and condolences to the Latimer family and those who are staying around to help them through this period.

These are the times when we have an opportunity, as legislators, to put the signs away. We just heard about

logos in elections. This is a time when we want to remove those logos. Private members' time is specific. Private members' time is for us, as legislators, to look, listen and hear the ideas of members in this House and, indeed, things that affect each other outside this House. I want to compliment the member for doing that, because that's exactly what this is supposed to be about: bringing forward legislation and ideas for legislation that require us to put away those partisan signs and start dealing with the issues that are very important to the people of our communities.

I'm glad to hear the member say this is not a swipe at CAS's. I, for one, am very proud of the CAS in my riding, which, as a matter of fact, has set provincial standards in terms of how they care for children, and yet they still have people questioning what they're doing. Why? Because they're dealing with children. That's the key here.

In my 25 years as an educator, I unfortunately had to deal with CAS cases; I had to deal with children being abused. That's why I stand in my place today and look the member in the eye and say, "Good for you." I'm glad you're bringing forward the type of legislation that's necessary to look to the care, concern and love we need to show for our children. That is the future; that is the present. We have to make sure we understand that we can't allow these things to continue. I applaud the bravery of the family for issuing in their statements that they wish this not to happen to anyone else. That tells me about the type of people we're dealing with in terms of the actual loss of a family member, their own child, and they take the next step immediately and say they don't want this to happen to anyone else. I'm truly moved, and I compliment the family for that ability. It's a very difficult thing to do.

In terms of the member's bill, I absolutely support it. I will work however I can alongside the member and do whatever I can to move that forward. He knows as well as I do, probably better than I do, that in terms of how the process works, this needs to get to committee. We will be moving it to the justice and social policy committee, an appropriate place to put this bill. As he knows, very few pieces of legislation in this place don't need tweaking or questions answered, and this is an appropriate place to put it, because we will then be able to have more people spend their voices on it.

Private members' time is not enough. We don't have enough time to actually debate this type of legislation. I believe there are some things in the bill that may parallel something that's already in existence. The one point the member taught me a little bit about, which I thought was a good idea, is that there are protections and reporting mechanisms for the first 12 months before apprehension but nothing after apprehension. I think that's another area we can improve upon, and I like that's where the bill is going as well.

The good things about this bill far outweigh any kind of nuances that can be discovered in committee. The direction is pure, the direction is important, and it's an

important message that we send to the rest of the communities in Ontario, to the families out there who are still going through these types of things.

As I said earlier, I went through this process as a principal in an elementary school, and fortunately there wasn't this end result. But tragically, it has happened in other places in this province, and we need the type of legislation that is being proposed by the honourable member to move forward and continue to ask the question: What else can we do to protect our children? I challenge us all to put aside anything else and focus on the concept of what we can do to protect our children. If we keep that in our hearts and minds, the legislative process can be overcome and we will produce legislation that's necessary for the protection of our children.

These are the types of things that some people will stand up and say, "You've regulated me out of existence; I can't take any more regulations." I would ask you to consider this: I'll take whatever regulation is necessary to protect the life of a child. I challenge us all to keep that in our hearts and minds when we make that decision. I congratulate the honourable member, and I support him in his attempt to get this bill passed.

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): It is with some degree of sadness that I join in this debate on Bill 78, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act and the Coroners Act to better protect the children of Ontario, but I want to commend the member for Burlington for bringing this forward. The short title of the bill is Kevin's Law, and based on the information I've seen, which was provided to me by the member, I want to extend my condolences to Kevin's entire family. Our hearts go out to them, and our thoughts and prayers are with them.

The member for Burlington has written to all MPPs in the Legislature and outlined the purpose of Bill 78:

"The bill amends the Child and Family Services Act.

"If a children's aid society applies to a court for an order under the act respecting access to a child by a parent of the child and the court makes the order, the court on making the order is required to specify the supervision to which the access is subject if the parent has been charged with or convicted of an offence under the Criminal Code (Canada) involving an act of violence against the child or the other parent of the child.

"A person or children's aid society that obtains information that a child has died shall report the information to the Minister of Children and Youth Services if a court made an order under the act denying access to the child by a parent of the child or making the access subject to supervision, if, on the application of a children's aid society, a court varied the order to grant the access or to make it no longer subject to supervision and if the child subsequently died as a result of a criminal act while in the custody or charge of the parent. The minister shall report the information to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services who administers the Coroners Act. That minister shall direct a coroner to hold an inquest into the death.

“If the coroner in an inquest into the death of a victim as defined in the Victims’ Bill of Rights, 1995 designates a spouse, same-sex partner or parent of the victim as a person with standing at the inquest, the person may apply to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to have the costs that the person incurs for representation by legal counsel in connection with the inquest paid from the victims’ justice fund account.”

1120

At the outset of my remarks, I want to indicate to this House that I will be supporting this bill in principle. Again, I commend the member for Burlington for bringing it forward. I know that in his letter to MPPs, the MPP for Burlington informed us that the official motto of the office of the chief coroner of Ontario is, “We speak for the dead to protect the living.”

The member for Burlington, who reminds us that he has raised the matter of victims’ justice through private members’ initiatives in the past—and who continues to do so compassionately, yet forcefully, here today—should be commended for repeating the coroner’s motto. I’d say he’s right, in the sense that we, the living, need to be vigilant and speak for children who have died, so that others may be protected from injustice and violence.

I believe we need to uphold the highest standards of justice, while our objectives as MPPs must be in the very best interest of children. So I’m grateful to be able to speak to the principles that are inherent in this bill, and to do so as the Conservative spokesperson for children and youth services. I would be remiss, however, if I did not mention some of the things we have done, and things we must do in other realms, in other spheres of our activity, to improve the lives of children in Ontario.

Recently, I spoke in this House about KidsAbility, formerly the Rotary Children’s Centre, a children’s treatment centre that provides services for children with disabilities in my riding of Waterloo-Wellington. I spoke on behalf of other treatment centres like it across the province. In my statement to the Legislature and my follow-up to the minister, I demanded that funding for KidsAbility, which serves children with cerebral palsy, spina bifida, muscular dystrophy, Down syndrome and communications disorders, be increased.

I should remind the House that I said at that time that if the budget didn’t address the concerns that had been brought to my attention and, in turn, the House’s attention, this government would demonstrate not a compassionate heart but a heart as cold as ice. I also remind members that it was the Liberal Party, now in government, that during the last election sold itself to the people of Ontario as the compassionate choice. While there was a fleeting reference to children’s treatment centres in the budget, there apparently was no increased operating funding announced in the budget for children’s treatment centres, with the exception of some new funding for children’s mental health programs.

I’ll say again: Unless the funding crisis that KidsAbility is facing is addressed by the government, the number of children on the waiting list who need treat-

ment could increase to as many as 1,335, according to a recent report in the K-W Record. I’m sure all members of this House would consider that unacceptable.

I recall that the KidsAbility motto is “These kids can’t wait.” I agree; they shouldn’t. I expect to hear something soon from the minister that are these kids will be a priority for the provincial government.

I also need to mention my Bill 77, when I have the chance to do so again. I can’t imagine why a government that obviously wants to protect children travelling in motor vehicles would not want to at least be consistent and fair with parents and families. Why would they not provide the same provincial retail sales tax exemption for booster seats for older children, which they are forcing tens of thousands of parents to buy—the same retail sales tax exemption they provide on seats for younger children, whose car seats are exempt from the 8% retail sales tax?

There is still hope that the appropriate funding will be forthcoming for KidsAbility. I would urge the government to treat parents fairly and equitably and not tax booster seats they are compelling parents to buy.

The fact that I have to state these things again is somewhat frustrating in itself. The government made a promise not to cut taxes. Seven months later, they are raising taxes. The same can be said for their promise not to run a deficit in government or add to the debt, both of which, unfortunately, they have indicated they will do right up until the year 2008, adding to the debt every year.

As we debate Bill 78 today, I could go on and on about promises that have not been kept, like the broken promise to hundreds of autistic children and their families to provide intensive behavioural intervention therapy beyond the age of six—a commitment that the Premier made to a parent, in writing, just before the election.

I do want to allow other members time to add their voices to the debate Bill 78, so I will conclude my remarks. I will close by saying again, as I did just after the budget, that I think the Liberal government has seriously damaged its credibility by breaking promises that it made during the election campaign. To be constructive, I hope that the government will do the right thing for children and their families, to protect them and their rights and provide any assistance needed to reach their full potential in life. Once again, I encourage all members of this House to support the member for Burlington’s Bill 78.

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): I’m pleased to speak to the bill. Obviously, as my friends before me have said, the aim of the proposed bill is to enhance child protection, and I commend the member for his efforts in this regard.

I do want to comment that it is unfortunate that the member for Waterloo-Wellington debased the debate on this important piece of legislation by bringing in partisan politics when private members’ time is an opportunity for all of us to come together and meet some of the significant challenges that we face in this province.

As someone who has worked tirelessly for many years to better protect children from abuse, I know that there is much more we can do to protect children. This proposed bill is in response to a specific tragedy, I understand, which is now before the courts. I don't want to speak to specifics to that case in any way to jeopardize it, but I do want to express my deepest sympathies to the family, which, I understand, is in the Legislature today. I want to applaud them for their bravery in coming forward and talking publicly about a tragedy that has occurred in their lives. Just to come out and speak publicly about these issues is very difficult, but it is by coming together and speaking publicly about these issues and working together, without regard for partisan politics, that I think we can all be proud of the work we accomplish to protect children and their families in this province.

I want to speak for a moment about a similar family and circumstance in my own community, about a mother as brave as the one in this room today. My own community of Etobicoke-Lakeshore was struck by the tragedy of the murder of Farah Khan a number of years ago. Our community came together, from all backgrounds, all types of people, to grieve for a little girl—at that time, we did not even know her name. We didn't know where she had come from, we didn't know why she had been murdered, and we had no understanding of the issues that were before the community. We came together and we grieved with the police officers who had found Farah.

We came together at an organization that I've been involved with for a number of years called the Gatehouse, which also works for the protection of children to ensure they're not revictimized in these tragic circumstances. The Gatehouse is a fantastic organization that helps children who have been abused by not further victimizing them when they're coming forward and telling their stories. It's a gingerbread house on the Lakeshore. It's called the Gatehouse because it's the old psychiatric hospital gatehouse on the Lakeshore. It is an example of a community coming together to deal with the issue of child abuse. The community joined together and renovated this wonderful old facility. It looks like you're entering your grandmother's house, but in fact what you're doing is coming into a state-of-the-art videotape facility where the CAS and police interview children so they're able to tell their stories in a comfortable surrounding. At the Gatehouse the social workers assist the family in dealing with tragic and difficult circumstances, such as those of this family.

The Gatehouse, being near where Farah's family came from, reached out at that time and recognized that we also had a role to play in the community. We also needed to help families grieve. This past week, we joined together again at the Gatehouse, and I have to tell you, I met another very brave woman that day. The mother of Farah Khan joined us this past weekend to put in Farah's garden. As someone who has been working in this field for many years, you don't become hardened, but you perhaps become a little less emotional. I can tell you, as I

spoke to Farah's mother across the garden that day and thanked her for coming forward and keeping the issue of keeping children safe in the front of all of our minds, I was very emotional. It was a very overwhelming day to work with that family.

Needing this to be a public response and needing us to work together in community is an example of what we try to bring together in our own community at the Gatehouse to support families who are coming forward, taking those brave acts and saying, "Let's talk publicly about this issue and let's work together."

1130

Last evening I had another incredible and interesting opportunity as I joined with my community again in Etobicoke-Lakeshore to conduct a community safety audit. We've had, unfortunately, some incidents of sexual assault in our community over the last year, and we selected one of the areas in the Mabelle-Cordova area in my riding, if you're familiar—the Islington-Dundas area. We joined with METRAC on the night they were launching their community safety audits. The message we were talking about in our community was, you need to look after each other. You need to pay attention to what's happening to your neighbour, to your neighbour's children.

These are the very issues that I think this brave family is trying to bring forward and have us talk about in the Legislature today. If we could only have had the information that was available, that other neighbours knew, that they had been cognizant of. We have to look out for our neighbours' children. We should not live insular lives.

In conducting our community safety audit last night, we walked about the community and talked to families. We said, "Do you feel safe here at night? Do you feel that your neighbours are watching out for you?" I have to say, one of the most invigorating statements I heard from one of the mothers was, "It's unfortunate that these terrible incidents happened in our community, but do you know what they did? They opened our eyes to the fact that we need to look out for one another. We need to pay attention to what's happening to our neighbour and our neighbour's children." Speaking publicly and doing these things are ways that we will be able to better protect children and their families.

This government is working on the issue of protecting children. The creation of a new children's ministry and a minister who is compassionate and caring about the well-being of children in our society is a good first step. The good work that the coroner has done in all sorts of areas can provide sound and good advice to the government.

In the area of domestic violence, we've taken a leadership role and started talking about children and how children are affected by domestic violence. Our significant campaign that we will be undertaking is to focus on children. The funds that we've made available on second-stage housing will help children, because it is only by breaking the cycle of violence that you can protect those children, and there is so much more to do.

Obviously, as my friends before me have said, there are some issues with this legislation and the format that

it's proposed in, whether we need to acknowledge that there may be some duplication, that we might be stepping on the toes of the coroner, who already does wonderful and great work. But at its heart we can all come together in the recognition that we want to take this forward and move it, because we need to make sure that women and their children are safe and that our society responds to those needs.

I'm very pleased to have had a chance to speak to the issue. I thank the family for joining us here today, and I thank you for your bravery in continuing to bring this issue forward to all of us.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm pleased to speak on the member from Burlington's bill this morning. This is a very tragic and serious matter.

I'd just like to say, initially, that the member from Burlington, as we all know, has been a long-time advocate of crime victims in Ontario. He was the author of the original Victims' Bill of Rights, which he presented three times to the Ontario Legislature before it was ultimately enacted by the Harris government in 1996.

The bill created a special victims' justice fund to provide assistance to crime victims, and was subsequently amended to create Canada's first office for victims of crime. Bill 78 is a continuation of the member's commitment to helping victims of crime in this province. I've been pleased to serve with him since 1995.

Certainly, the issue today is gaining support for Bill 78. The intent of the member is for it to proceed to the standing committee on justice and social policy. The intent of the bill, after that review by the committee—I imagine it would be a very extensive review before it comes for third reading. Should the bill pass, there will be an automatic coroner's inquest when a child dies from a Criminal Code offence while in the care of a parent who is or has been the subject of supervised parental access. The bill would also specifically permit the use of the victim's justice fund to cover the costs of legal counsel for a crime victim's family at the inquest.

Being here today in the presence of the family, in this situation, I just hold out my respect for them. I'm the father of a six-year-old. I know that young boys are very active, very special, and a situation for one to be snuffed out at the age of two is really a tragedy that no one can speak of, other than the family of a young child they had great hopes for and loved very much.

Bill 78 is named in Kevin Latimer's memory. The call for an automatic coroner's inquest is a call for justice. It's a call for a voice for the person who has died. It's a complex issue. The supervisory system we have with respect to family matters in this province needs review, coordination and support, not only from our court system but from the support services that are out there with respect to dealing with children.

Unsupervised access: The purpose of it is to make sure the child is protected. That is the most important issue in terms of putting the child's rights first. The nub of this bill, from what I think member Jackson has put forth, is the protection of the child. The child's rights have to be put first, without exception.

I can tell you that in the process of a private member's bill, it can go through the House very quickly if the will of the House is there, if there's seriousness given to the particular issue. Coroners' inquests are very serious matters. The nice thing about this is that it's linked to the Victims' Bill of Rights and gives them some power, some standing at the inquest. It gives them some fairness and gives victims the rights they deserve in connection with a matter such as this. I can say that very clearly.

I know that member Jackson has some further comments he wants to bring from the family. I'm giving my time in recognition of that, because I know that member Jackson has done a great amount of work on this. This is a very tight bill. It's well drafted. There may or may not be amendments, depending on what the Attorney General's office or the minister of public security have.

I will be voting in support of it.

1140

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): At the outset, I must state that we will be supporting this bill and I commend the member for Burlington for his work on behalf of children everywhere.

This is a tough time, I am sure, for Kevin's mother, grandmother and extended family. The death of a child is one of the most difficult things we face as human beings. Seeing the pain in their eyes, knowing the struggles they have gone through and will continue to go through, we must each one of us try to put ourselves in their position and try to say what we would do or what we can do to make things better.

What this bill is attempting to do is very simple. There are two phases to it. The first is that there would be an automatic coroner's inquest whenever a child died in such circumstances. At present there is not such an automatic coroner's inquest. It is discretionary and it is held when, according to the coroner, the facts might warrant it. I believe we must adopt a higher standard, and I think the standard that Mr Jackson, the member for Burlington, has put forward is appropriate.

Every child's death must concern us. We must never accept that an accident might merely happen. Of course, they do happen. But when a child is in care, when a child is under supervision, when a parent has been blocked access in the past or when there is potential criminal wrongdoing, we as a society have an obligation to make sure that every aspect is looked at and that no stone is left unturned. If there are changes to be made, and that is the ultimate result of a coroner's inquest, then they should be made with a very fine eye and diligence to make sure that what happens to one child never happens to any other.

The second aspect of the bill, which also must be commended, is the victim's justice fund, where the legal costs of the crime victims' family at inquest are covered. These can be lengthy. The costs can be horrendous, especially in a family circumstance such as that of Kevin's mother, who was forced to leave home to go and live in a shelter and who was at home caring for the remaining child. The costs may end up being prohibitive.

This is true of many families in our province, not just this one. I would think that this aspect of the bill, which assures a guaranteed fund for legal representation for the family so that they know justice is not only done, but is seen to be done, is of paramount importance.

As a society, we have for too long turned a blind eye to familial abuse. We have turned a blind eye when children have been abused by their parents or by those in positions of respect or authority. We have pretended that it did not happen, and I think we ourselves are a little to blame. We know there is a great amount of spousal abuse, and we are starting to learn more and more that there is also child abuse, which can be physical, mental, sexual and in any other psychological form.

In the past, prior to coming to this Legislature, I had the privilege and honour of serving with the Toronto Children's Aid Society for a number of years, both as the mayor of East York and later as the representative from the new megacity of Toronto. I also had the honour, for some four years, of sitting as the city of Toronto representative on the board of directors of the Toronto Child Abuse Centre.

To sit on those boards is to know how very precarious the lives of some children are, to see first-hand how children are abused by their parents, how children are abused by people in positions of authority, how they are abused by those under whom they are put in care. It is trite to say that those organizations do the very best they can possibly do, often with limited funds, often with insufficient staff and often having to weigh the needs of the child versus the needs of the parents versus the rights people have in our society. I cast no umbrage on them or on anyone who works for them or on any society in Ontario. But mistakes do happen, and those institutions have often been at the forefront of helping us to understand how to make sure that we can learn from those mistakes and that things can change.

We know in this society that people in positions of trust, like the father of Kevin and in fact many people who have access through court orders, can abuse that trust, whether they abuse the trust by taking violence upon the spouse or child or whether they do it, as in this case, possibly by neglect. We know in our society that there have been many institutions that have been put in positions of trust. We can think most clearly of the residential schools to which many of our native children were sent, to which many children were sent from broken families, who would go there, hopefully, to get an education but who got far more than that. They have had a history and a lifetime of abuse. We also know that shrines like Maple Leaf Gardens, where young men went to worship their hockey heroes, ended up in part, to some of them at least, being places of abuse over the years.

Mr Jackson has put forward a very important bill. What he is asking is that the bill be passed here today, and I am absolutely confident it will be. I hope it is unanimous. But he has also suggested that it needs to go to the committee on justice and social policy, which is appropriate. That committee will have an opportunity to

look at this well-drafted bill and hopefully to make the necessary amendments and to give the necessary monies available to make sure the bill does what it is supposed to do.

It will also be an opportunity, and I think a first opportunity, for many people who are in positions with which this government entrusts them—children's aid societies and others—to see the bill. We know this bill has not been widely circulated to them. We got an opportunity to speak to the executive director of the Sudbury-Manitoulin Children's Aid Society, who had not had an opportunity until just this week to have a look at the bill. They are generally supportive of it, as you would expect them to be. They are asking that there be an opportunity to read it further and to make any appropriate amendments to the bill at the time of committee. They are also suggesting that there needs to be clarification about particular sections that would be amended. He is looking at pages two and three of the bill, around the Child and Family Services Act.

We welcome that opportunity. We support the bill today on second reading. We will continue to work with Mr Jackson and all those who are supportive of this bill to make sure that what happened to Kevin, that what has happened to other children in Ontario, comes an end. The coroner has a responsibility to give us that advice. We thank Mr Jackson for giving us the opportunity to debate the bill here today.

1150

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): Often when people rise in the House they say it's a pleasure. It certainly is no pleasure to rise today. I think we all wish this debate was not taking place, but I do commend the member from Burlington for bringing the issue forward. It's an issue that I think needs our full attention.

I'd also at this time like to extend my personal thanks to Kevin's mother and grandmother for their courage in being able to be sit with us today as this bill is debated.

Like the member for Beaches-East York, I was a board member of the children's aid society in Halton for 12 years and served for three years as president. In a role such as that, you see the best and the worst of society. You see some of the things that people are capable of, you see some of the situations that young people and children in our province are forced to live in and you wonder how that is still able to take place in our society today. But you also see some of the best parts of society. You see where people are prepared to step forward. You see where people are prepared to fund organizations, to volunteer for organizations, to try to work on behalf of children in this province.

We try to give children's aid societies around the province the tools to do the job. We give them those tools in certain ways. Obviously, one of the ways we do it is to fund those societies. Another way we do it is to employ forms of legislation that these societies must follow. Quite often we rely on the best judgement of the people employed by the societies, who I think for the most part do a tremendous job on our behalf. The societies are con-

stantly under stress. The societies are constantly dealing with situations of neglect that most of us could not imagine.

Children's aid societies themselves, oddly enough, are a recent phenomenon in our society. What many people don't know is that their formation was actually based on the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. We had institutions in place that protected animals before we had organizations to protect children in our society.

We talk about putting children first, and to me this is a perfect opportunity for us, as a Legislature, together in a unanimous fashion, falling behind the primary work of the member from Burlington, to show that we truly do put children first, to show that we can remove discretion, to show that the inquest would become an automatic outfall of a tragic situation such as this.

I certainly would ask you to support the bill moving forward. Some people have suggested improvements to the bill, ways it could perhaps be amended so that its implementation would be easier. I'm positive the member from Burlington will support those amendments when they come. In fact, he has already welcomed them.

The fact that it would move to an automatic inquest is something we can learn from. It's something we're able to use to prevent the type of tragedy that befell this family that has joined us here today from ever happening again. Inquests, as painful as they are to go through, are instructive. They tell you what to do in the future to avoid some of the tragedies that have happened in our society in the past. It gives us hope for the future. It allows us to see, to ask, how could this situation have been avoided, how could this family not have had to go through what they're going through today, and basically, how could Kevin still be alive today?

So I would ask that all members of the House support this bill. It's a worthy bill. It speaks to the best of our society. It may make a little good out of an obvious tragedy that not one of us would want to go through or that anyone we love should have to go through.

Mr Jackson: I want to thank all my colleagues in the House today, the members for Brant, Waterloo-Wellington, Etobicoke-Lakeshore, Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, Beaches-East York and my colleague from Oakville. I want to thank each and every one of you for your genuine and compassionate response. On behalf of the family, your words of support and your commitment to children's safety in our province are deeply appreciated.

Coroners' inquests are a serious matter. In my community I asked for the very first coroner's inquest 18 years ago, when four senior citizens died in one of our nursing homes. At first there wasn't going to be one. We pressured and lobbied. As a result, we found out that the legionnaires' disease they died from could have been prevented if we super-conducted all the pipes in the building.

As a result of that coroner's inquest, we do that as a matter of form in our province. We've not had a single senior die of legionnaires' disease in our institutions. By

extension, we did it for all residential institutions. So the voice of the departed is a very powerful instrument for us, as legislators, as we improve the quality of life for our province.

I don't believe that we, as politicians, have a role to always be asking for them. That's why it's more than appropriate at times, especially with children, because the thing that overcame me with Kevin Latimer was that this child never had an opportunity to speak; he couldn't speak. His brother, who witnessed this horrible accident, could barely speak. But he will be able to speak through a coroner's inquest, and we will be a better province for his short, fragile and wonderful life.

I want to specifically acknowledge the presence of Jenny and her mother, Marjorie. Marjorie came to see me some months ago. She brought with her a petition. But I have to say, for those of us in public service, we create some empathy with our constituents and try to reach a common ground. I'd be remiss if I didn't admit that I grew up in a family where my mother had to bury three of her children. As my colleague from Beaches-East York put on the record, this is probably one of the cruellest things that happens to us in life as parents, and no amount of praying will ever explain how much strength we need from God when this happens. This is not unknown to a lot of families in this province. So I want to acknowledge the presence in the House today of the family.

I'm not going to read a petition into the record that the family had circulated. It dealt with a whole series of issues. It wasn't done in the appropriate form, but it captured the breadth of issues that were troubling to them as a family as they go through this horrible journey of dealing with the death of a child and determining the way in which institutions in our society, whether they be the courts or the children's aid society, were able to be of support or assistance, or lacking clear direction in terms of an understanding on the part of the family.

There are a lot of complexities in this issue, and that's why a coroner's inquest will look at the full breadth of the issues. We can look at reforms to the Child and Family Services Act, to the Coroners Act and maybe to several other acts that deal with child protection in our province.

I know the government has indicated its willingness to look at this area specifically, and I know members of the Conservative caucus look forward to those opportunities to debate that in the Legislature and participate on the justice and social policy committee of this Parliament to effect those changes.

Marjorie Latimer, the grandmother of this child, indicated in her statement—I'll just read, in closing, her comments from a rather long victim's impact statement:

"People who are abusive and neglectful come into our lives and gain control over the weak; our children are most at risk. These offenders need to know that their actions and behaviour will no longer be tolerated. Prevention needs to be the forefront and enforcement needs to be the law."

We believe that Kevin's Law will result in opportunities for us to see ways in which we can create more reforms and will give a voice to the departed. On behalf of the Latimer family, I respectfully request your support for Bill 78. I want to thank you for your support in sending it to the justice and social policy committee. Let Kevin Latimer speak to our need to better protect other children in our province. Only then can we truly believe that the smile that was so constant on this young child's face will endure in our hearts forever.

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

ELECTION AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI ÉLECTORALE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): We shall first deal with ballot item number 21.

Mr Patten has moved second reading of Bill 76, An Act to amend the Election Act.

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 ayes have it.

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

KEVIN'S LAW (CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT), 2004

LOI KEVIN DE 2004 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES SERVICES À L'ENFANCE ET À LA FAMILLE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): We will now deal with ballot item number 22.

Mr Jackson has moved second reading of Bill 78, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act and the Coroners Act to better protect the children of Ontario.

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

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): Mr Speaker, I respectfully request that we refer Bill 78 to the standing committee on justice and social policy.

The Deputy Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

The division bells rang from 1201 to 1206.

ELECTION AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI ÉLECTORALE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): All those in favour will stand and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Bartolucci, Rick
Brotten, Laurel C.
Brownell, Jim

Fonseca, Peter
Gerretsen, John
Lalonde, Jean-Marc

Phillips, Gerry
Prue, Michael
Qaadri, Shafiq

Bryant, Michael
Caplan, David
Colle, Mike
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Di Cocco, Caroline
Flynn, Kevin Daniel

Levac, Dave
Matthews, Deborah
McNeely, Phil
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol
Patten, Richard
Peters, Steve

Sandals, Liz
Smith, Monique
Sterling, Norman W.
Van Bommel, Maria
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Yakubuski, John
Zimmer, David

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please stand and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Baird, John R.
Hardeman, Ernie

Hudak, Tim
Jackson, Cameron
Ouellette, Jerry J.

Runciman, Robert W.
Tascona, Joseph N.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 30; the nays are 8.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Mr Speaker, I respectfully suggest we refer the bill to the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour, please stand.

Take your seats, please.

All those opposed will please stand.

A majority is in favour. It will be referred to the committee.

All matters having to do with private members' public business having been dealt with, I do now leave the chair. The House will resume at 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1209 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): Dalton McGuinty and this government are not only breaking promises to Ontarians, the fact is they are also breaking the law of this province. As members of this House, we have a responsibility to uphold the law of the province

In that regard, I want to put the House on notice that I have tabled a resolution today that reads as follows:

"Be it resolved that, in the opinion of this House,

1. The government of Ontario comply with section 2 of the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999, that requires a referendum to be held to authorize the following provisions in a bill that receives first reading in 2004:

1. A provision that amends the Income Tax Act to establish a new tax called the Ontario health premium...."

It goes on to say that, "Despite section 17 of Bill 83 ... the government of Ontario is in contravention of the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999, if a bill receives first reading that includes the provisions described in paragraph 1 before a referendum is held to authorize those provisions.

We are going to debate this resolution in this House. I would trust that all members of this Legislature see it as their responsibility to uphold the law of the land. Dalton

McGuinty may want to feel free to break his own promises, but surely, as members of the Legislature, we won't allow him to break the law of this province.

RUSSIAN-SPEAKING CONGRESS OF CANADA

Mr David Zimmer (Willowdale): I rise today to draw this House's attention to a significant event that I had the privilege to attend on behalf of Premier McGuinty in my riding on Sunday, May 16.

The Russian-speaking community of Canada gathered in my riding of Willowdale at the North York Civic Centre to celebrate a historic milestone: the creation and inauguration session of the Russian-speaking Congress of Canada. This congress represents some 350,000 Russian-speaking Canadians across Canada. This special occasion marks for the first time in its 100-year history the coming together of the Russian-speaking community to speak with a united voice.

It somehow seems fitting that this event took place in Canada and in Toronto. It reaffirms Toronto's position as the most multicultural city in this country. The Russian-speaking community is poised to do great things with the creation of this new umbrella organization. In the GTA alone, there is already an extensive cultural network of Russian not-for-profit organizations, media outlets, religious parishes and business leaders. This network includes five television programs, three radio programs, 10 weekly newspapers, four annual cultural events and more than 1,000 Russian businesses.

The Russian-speaking Congress of Canada can serve as a model for us all, demonstrating the strength and stature of a collective united voice.

RURAL ONTARIO

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I rise today to express my concern with the government's lack of support for rural Ontario. After the election, I was immediately uneasy when rural affairs disappeared from the radar screen only to reappear under the jurisdiction for the minister responsible for urban infrastructure. I have not been reassured since. In fact, since the budget I have become alarmed. This budget consistently diverts dollars from rural to urban Ontario and sets in place programs that benefit large cities over small towns and villages. One might be inclined to think this government doesn't know rural Ontario exists, or doesn't want to.

The government has not protected rural residents from unfair hydro rate increases, as promised. It has broken its promise of transition funding for tobacco farmers. It has allocated \$83 per farm for nutrient management funding this year—hardly worthwhile. The two cents in gas tax that will be diverted to municipalities is dedicated to transit and means that the majority of the money will flow to urban centres. Maybe someone should tell the government that rural areas generally don't have transit systems.

To completely ignore the people who feed this province would have been too obvious, so the budget speech reannounced a few small measures the government has already taken in agriculture since the election. However, the Minister of Finance failed to mention the \$128 million that has been cut from the budget of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food.

Recently this government received a report that suggested that rural Ontario was unsustainable and that program dollars should be funnelled from rural Ontario to urban centres in the province. I'm afraid the budget presented yesterday shows the government wants to accept that premise and is headed in that direction.

I urge the Premier to break with tradition and keep the promise. I urge him to listen to the Minister of Agriculture, if indeed he is advocating on behalf of rural Ontario, and if he has lost faith in his colleague, to replace the present minister with one he respects.

CHILDREN'S IMMUNIZATION PROGRAM

Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): Ontario health care providers are finally receiving the tools they need to lead the fight against chickenpox, bacterial meningitis and pneumonia. These diseases have threatened the health of our Ontario infants and children for far too long. Immunizations save lives, prevent serious illnesses and are recognized as one of the most effective public health interventions.

This government is taking the steps required to protect our children against preventable diseases for which vaccines are readily available, something the previous government put on the back burner for years. In the past 10 years, Ontario has held one of the worst records for immunization in Canada.

With this announcement, we have become only the second province to offer all necessary vaccinations for children. Adding these vaccines to the children's immunization program will save Ontario parents up to \$600 per child in a child's first year. The reaction to the announcement of these additions has been overwhelming. The Meningitis Research Foundation of Canada has praised this government's action, proclaiming that the new vaccines "give parents and caregivers the peace of mind that their children have been protected to the fullest extent of our health care ability."

The new vaccines will be added to the children's immunization program in the coming months and demonstrate this government's commitment to the health of Ontario's youngest citizens.

Yesterday I visited an immunization program in the Cambridge area with the Minister of Health and the response was overwhelming.

ABORIGINAL HEALTH CARE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I am saddened that I have to raise an issue like this in the Legislature today, but I want to relate the experience of a

young aboriginal woman from a remote First Nation in northwestern Ontario.

Her name is Corrine Jeremiah. She had to travel out of her community to Thunder Bay Regional Hospital earlier this year to give birth. Sadly, just before her due date on March 30 she miscarried. In accordance with aboriginal tradition, she asked if the miscarried fetus could be returned to her community for the proper services. She went home to her community. Five weeks later the fetus came to the community in a cardboard box by parcel post, and it was labelled "diagnostic specimen." Of course, the miscarried fetus was decomposing badly. She is now undergoing counselling.

Imagine if someone came from Collingwood to Toronto to give birth and then miscarried and had to return home, and the fetus was mailed to them by parcel post, decomposed. This is a symbol of what happens when federal and provincial governments play ping pong with aboriginal health care.

I ask the Minister of Health to look into this situation, to look at having a review so that it never happens again.

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PRIMARY CARE

Mrs Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): My constituents are very pleased with the announcement of 150 family health teams that will work to improve primary care for 2.5 million Ontarians. The Liberal plan for change calls for improvements to direct primary care, providing front-line care that will bring family health teams to parts of the health system that have been neglected by the previous government. Family health teams will work to reduce wait times in hospitals and reduce doctor shortages in areas that are currently underserved. This is especially crucial in my rural riding, where constituents have been feeling the pressure of not having access to a family doctor.

Family health teams consist of doctors, nurses and nurse practitioners, working alongside other health care professionals to provide much-needed front-line care, as well as providing consistent referrals to other community services like home care and nutrition counselling. Linda Haslam-Stroud, president of the Ontario Nurses' Association, responded, proclaiming, "Today's budget announcements about health care are an indication that the Liberal government clearly understands the challenges front-line nurses are facing in Ontario."

The former government's slash-and-spend approach to health care funding has resulted in a family doctor shortage that is unacceptable to my constituents. The creation of family health teams is representative of a new way to provide front-line health care. The Liberal plan for change will result in improved front-line care to millions of Ontarians.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): In rural ridings such as Leeds-Grenville, a man's word is his

bond. I come from an area where major deals are often sealed with a handshake, so you can imagine my disgust with the McGuinty Liberals' first budget. Mr McGuinty's spin doctors and his media sycophants at the Globe and Star have tried to portray the man as a saint. Some saint. Saints don't break solemn vows or the laws of the province.

During the election, McGuinty guaranteed voters he would not raise taxes, despite making a glut of expensive promises. He even signed an agreement with the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, promising a balanced budget with no tax increases, in compliance with the Taxpayer Protection Act. He stood before television cameras, he addressed groups, from prominent business leaders to schoolchildren, each time repeating the promise that his government would not increase taxes. He even offered proof, claiming an accounting firm had reviewed his promises and had verified that no tax increases would be required.

I'm sure that millions of Ontarians join me in questioning the moral fibre of a man who, it appears, would promise anything to get elected, while at the same time knowing in his own mind that he had no intention of following through with those promises.

I have to ask myself: What kind of man would do this? What example does this set for young people in Ontario? What answer can a parent give to a child who asks, "When is it OK to break the law? When is it OK to mislead?" One thing is for sure: Anyone shaking hands with Premier McGuinty would be well advised to count their fingers afterwards.

MEMBER'S CONDUCT

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): On Tuesday, budget day, the government laid out a beautiful four-year plan. There will be shorter waiting times for cardiac and cancer care. There will be expanded home care with 150 new family health teams. There will be free immunization for children and 8,000 new full-time—full-time—nursing positions. In my riding, we're going to get brownfields taken care of. I want to tell you that people are very proud. Municipalities see the new deal.

The opposition has no plan. They're just taking whacks. They don't even have manners.

I want to bring to the House's attention an editorial today in the Ottawa Citizen, entitled "Baird's Boorish Behaviour."

According to the Citizen, the member "did the cause of civil political discourse in Ontario no favours with his behaviour in the legislature Tuesday...."

"Screaming insults as he was escorted out of the chamber made Mr Baird appear out of control and foolish."

Reminding its readers of the infamous Magna budget—we all know that one—the Citizens said that the member's "unparliamentary language and his ejection from the Legislature are just the latest acts of contempt the Conservatives have shown for the assembly...."

“But dumb stunts like this diminish credibility.... We expect better.”

I agree with the Citizen. The people want responsible debate about our budget.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to continue my statement from yesterday about that Jim Carrey movie that sounds like “Fire Fire.” Dalton McGuinty can certainly star in the sequel. But it's not just me saying that. I want to read comments from average people across Ontario that are popping up on the Internet.

In the Toronto Star:

“Voices: Budget Fallout”

“It is one thing to tax tobacco, alcohol and luxuries. But to tax extra for health care after promising not to do such a thing, is so dishonest that no words can describe it. If Mr McGuinty has any integrity he would resign immediately.” A person from Whitby, Ontario.

“Wildly regressive health care taxes. How ‘liberal’ is that?” A constituent from Ottawa.

“I am ashamed to say I voted for the Liberal Party in the last election. I thought it would be an improvement.” A gentleman from Brantford.

The last one, from Toronto: “It is robbery. Rather than face the necessary challenge of stopping waste and duplication in the health care system, the Liberals chose the easy way—steal the money from taxpayers and throw it away.”

I have two things to say to my colleagues on the government backbenches. The second thing is, remember that when you go to your ridings over the upcoming Victoria Day holiday week, you'll definitely hear this from a large number of your constituents. And when you're asked to dutifully read your scripts prepared by the backroom spin doctors, choreographers and puppet masters like Sheila James and Matt Maychak, remember that the geniuses in the Premier's office, safely ensconced in their offices, are figuring out which of the 16 seats they can afford to lose and still keep their jobs after the next election.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): There's a pleasant part to this, but this is not it: Let me take a moment to indicate that today is the last day for this group of pages. I know all members will want to join me in showing our appreciation for their hard work and assistance.

Here's the good news: I also know that members would want to congratulate this group for beating the previous speed record in delivering the budget documents on Tuesday.

Thank you for a job well done. I know you're going to continue to do the honours by having a wonderful oral question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): My question is to the Minister of Finance. Before I place the question, I'd like to thank the literally tens of thousands of Ontarians who are calling, writing, faxing all of us on the opposition side of the House to voice their disgust over this Liberal tax grab.

Minister, I've got your provincial budget in my hand, and on page 23 of your speech you have included revenues of \$78.4 billion to the province of Ontario. But there's an asterisk beside it which says “revenue ... \$3.9 billion.” Can you tell us how much of the \$3.9 billion you're booking as revenue this year will actually flow into the province's bank account this year?

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I tell my friend from Nepean-Carleton that the \$3.9 billion that is included in revenue this year is a result of policy changes that we made relating particularly to non-utility generators that had entered into power purchase contracts with the old Ontario Hydro. The accounting treatment of that policy change results in accountants telling us that we are to bring the recovery of those liabilities into our revenues this year if the policy is implemented this year. This gives us a revenue gain of \$3.9 billion in this fiscal year.

Mr Baird: I asked how many dollars would flow into the province's bank account that you claim, and you didn't give me a clear answer. I'll tell you what we've discovered, Minister. Very little of that \$3.9 billion will make it into the province's bank accounts this year. In fact, it could take our grandchildren until the year 2048 before all of that \$3.9 billion makes it into the bank account of the government, while at the same time you're booking it as revenue and spending it this year.

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This looks like an Enron-style accounting trick. I don't have to remind you that when Enron executives and financial officers broke the law and did this type of sham accounting, they went to jail. Minister, will you now not admit that this is a massive accounting fraud, and will you change the budget to ensure that it accurately reflects the finances of the province?

Hon Mr Sorbara: I say to my friend from Nepean-Carleton that his approach to this Legislature is an embarrassment to himself and his party. I want to say to my friend from Nepean-Carleton that he had enough time in cabinet, as Minister of Energy, to understand that it was more than two years ago that this province moved from a cash accounting system of accounting for its revenues to an accrual system of revenues. The system that was brought in two years ago is the right system, brought in by his administration when he was Minister of Energy. He knows, notwithstanding the two-bit performance he's been giving in this House, that what we are doing is exactly what we are required to do by the accounting procedures dictated by the public service accounting board of this country.

Mr Baird: I say to the member opposite, I don't need any lectures from him on ethics and integrity in government after his performance this week. I'll tell you where this \$3.9 billion comes from: It comes from the dirty electricity deals that he and his Liberal cabinet signed the last time they were in power. They signed sweetheart deals for as much as eight cents a kilowatt hour, and now, in an accounting sleight of hand, they are moving it from a debt and a liability on one set of books over to consumers on the other. The fact remains that you will collect virtually none of this \$3.9 billion, but through an accounting sleight of hand you will pocket that money and spend it. People at Enron went to jail for this type of activity. How is what you are doing any different?

Hon Mr Sorbara: I pity the member from Nepean-Carleton. I pity him because it was less than two years ago that he sat in this Legislature as Minister of Energy. They had no plans at all for energy. The sector was in crisis. Either this former Minister of Energy knows the real story of non-utility generating contracts and knows that the revenues resulting from the change of policy require us to do what we are doing, or he spent so little time looking after his responsibilities as Minister of Energy that he is an embarrassment to that government, to his party and to this Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): New question.

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Minister of Finance. I'd like you to think back to the oath of office you took when you took your seat here in the Legislature. I would like you to think about the context of that oath of office, which indeed, as a member of the Legislature, speaks to your upholding the laws and statutes of this place. Do you believe that you, as a member of the Legislature, should be upholding the law of this province?

Hon Mr Sorbara: Yes, I do.

Mr Klees: That being the case, I would like to remind the honourable member of legislation that is in force in this province today. It's section 2 of the Taxpayer Protection Act, which requires a referendum to be held to authorize any legislation that would be introduced for first reading in this House that would increase taxes.

If in fact the member believes it's his responsibility to uphold the law of this province, why is he breaking the law by introducing a budget into this place that breaks the law because it has not had the mandate of a referendum?

Hon Mr Sorbara: My friend from Oak Ridges is apparently, I think, spending too much time with his colleague my friend from Nepean-Carleton, given the tenor of that question. He suggests, with the rhetoric of his first question and in his supplementary, that somehow we are breaking the law. But I tell my friend that the fair and appropriate thing to do is simply to acknowledge to the people of Ontario that when we introduced the budget, we introduced the very same amendment that Minister Ecker, in her government, introduced to amend the Taxpayer Protection Act in order to bring forward amendments that otherwise would have required a referendum.

I want to tell you that the revenues we will raise with the health premium will put in place reforms to the health care system that your government ought to have proceeded with over the course of eight years, but did nothing on.

Mr Klees: The honourable member misses the point. I remind him of a quote from his leader, now the Premier, on October 4, 2003. It was in the context of the third party wanting to have standing as an official party, all in the interest of democratic reform. The Premier at that point in time said, "The rules are the rules—there will be no change. There was a rule in place. In fact, the rule has been changed once already. We'll respect the rule."

Why will you not respect the rule that is in place in this province today that requires you to have a referendum before you bring in a multi-billion dollar tax increase to the people of this province? Why will you not do that? What are you afraid of? Why will you not follow the law? Why do you insist on breaking the law with this budget?

Hon Mr Sorbara: What the member from Oak Ridges wants is a referendum on whether or not we should have 36,000 additional cardiac procedures in this province, a referendum on whether or not we should have 2,300 additional joint replacements, a referendum on whether we ought to have nine new MRI and CT sites, a referendum on whether or not we ought to have 9,000 new cataract procedures, a referendum on whether or not we ought to reform and improve children's mental health in this province, a referendum on whether or not we ought to give social assistance recipients an additional 3% on the money they use to feed themselves. The fact is, I categorically reject that referendum.

Mr Klees: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I want the House to know that we have a petition that will be circulated to call for that referendum.

The Speaker: That is not a point of order.

HEALTH PREMIUMS

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Finance. Across this province, people are furious at your regressive and unfair tax grab that you try to call a health premium. They're furious that under your tax scheme, an individual making \$26,000 a year will have to pay 1.2% of their taxable income, while someone who has an income of \$150,000 a year will only pay 0.5% of their income. They're furious that someone with an income of \$45,000 will have to pay 1% of their income, while someone with an income of half a million dollars will only pay 0.2% of their income.

In the election, you foolishly promised that you weren't going to raise taxes. Now you turn around and you go after middle- and modest-income working families. After making a broken promise the centre of your budget, why should people believe anything Liberals promise?

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I tell my friend from Kenora-Rainy River that the centre of our budget was a health care plan that will dramatically transform the delivery of health care in this province and, at the same time, bring into line the ever-increasing costs of health care. It will result in 8,000 new nurses being hired. It will result in a far higher quality of long-term care in facilities that look after our seniors. It will transform health care. It will give service with community health teams to 167,000 people this year who would otherwise be without a family doctor. It will increase the number of doctors, nurses and nurse practitioners practising in this province. It will shorten waiting lists for cardiac care, joint replacement and heart surgery.

That's what we have in a health care plan. What my friend for Kenora-Rainy River and the New Democratic Party lack is any plan at all for health care in this province.

1400

Mr Hampton: You can try that, but those promises are about as empty as the promise to stop development on the Oak Ridges moraine, about as empty as the promise to freeze hydro rates and about as empty as the promise to reduce auto insurance premiums by 20%.

Here's the reality: You have gone after modest- and middle-income families and you're literally going to take, as a result of this budget, \$3 billion out of their pockets. Meanwhile, the wealthiest people in Ontario, who got a 35% tax reduction from the Conservatives, you let go. Meanwhile, you're not going after corporations that got huge exemptions under the employer health tax. You had an option to go after the employer health tax and restore that tax loophole. You had an option to say to the people who got the massive tax cuts, "It's now your turn to contribute." Why should working families believe anything Liberals say from now on?

Hon Mr Sorbara: I recall that when, in the fall in this Legislature, we brought in Bill 2 that significantly raised corporate taxes in this province, as we said we would do during the election campaign, my friend from Kenora-Rainy River stood in his place and voted against that bill. He is against our reforms in health care. He is apparently against the notion of reducing waiting times for critical procedures. He is against a program that will give free vaccinations to children for chickenpox, pneumonia and meningitis. He is against reforming primary care so that services can be delivered more effectively in our communities.

My problem with my friend the leader of the New Democratic Party is that I know what he's against; I cannot figure out what he's for.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): New question.

Mr Hampton: To the Minister of Finance: The Minister of Finance stands here and wants people across Ontario to believe he didn't have a choice. You, sir, had a choice. You could have gone to individuals who have incomes of over \$100,000 a year and who got the 35% tax reduction, and you could have said to them, "It's now

time for you to make a greater contribution to health care." You could have gone to the largest corporations in Ontario, which got a \$700-million tax reduction through the employer health tax loophole, and you could have said to them, "It's time for you to pay up."

What did you do? You went after modest- and middle-income families and you're literally taking the whole \$3 billion from them. Why should those people believe anything you have to say about health care? Why should they believe anything Liberals promise from now on?

Hon Mr Sorbara: This province is the only province in Canada that will have a health premium that is geared to income. The very lowest premium paid by an individual will be \$60 per year and the highest premium will be \$900 per year. It's the only province in Canada that has a health premium that is geared to income. Now, back in the fall when my friend was in this Legislature and we brought forward a bill to significantly increase corporate taxes, as we said we were going to do, to roll back the tax decreases, the tax cuts that the Conservatives inappropriately gave to corporate Ontario, my friend from Kenora-Rainy River stood in his place and voted against that bill. His record doesn't stand up when it comes to taxes in this province.

Mr Hampton: The Minister of Finance says his middle-income tax grab is progressive. Here is the situation: Husband has an income of \$49,000, wife has an income of \$49,000, and the Ontario Liberals now say to that family, "You owe \$1,200 under the health tax." Frank Stronach has an income of \$52 million, and do you know what Ontario Liberals say? Mr Stronach only has to contribute \$900. That's your definition of progressive?

You are trying to deny that you had a choice. You want to talk about the phantom tax cuts of the Conservatives, that wouldn't have happened until 2005 or 2006. This is about your budget, your budget of this week, where you went after working families for \$3 billion. You didn't touch the corporations and the wealthiest of Ontario at all. Why should working families believe anything Liberals promise?

Hon Mr Sorbara: The answer to that question is plain and simple. My friend from Kenora-Rainy River has rhetoric beyond belief. In contrast to that, we have a plan. We have a plan that will put 8,000 new nurses in long-term-care facilities and community care facilities around Ontario. We have a plan that will see some 95,700 more Ontarians receive home care where they should be getting home care. We have a plan that will see some 2,300 more joint replacements done in this province for people whose hips no longer work. We have a plan for an additional 12,000 bed lifts so that nurses who are working in our hospitals and long-term-care facilities will not injure themselves on the job. That is what the people asked us to do during our consultation and that is the plan that will improve health care in the province of Ontario.

TAXATION

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): A question to the Acting Premier: We all know that you had no intention of keeping your campaign promise not to raise taxes. You raised taxes, but you say you were not aware of the \$5.6-billion fiscal risk. But, even after Erik Peters released his report on October 29, 2003, the Premier continued to tell people he would not raise taxes.

On November 1, on Focus Ontario, the Premier said, "... we will not be raising taxes. Families are carrying enough of burden as it is."

November 20, throne speech day: "We're not going to raise taxes. That's just not on the table."

December 18, in a media scrum: "I don't want to raise taxes. It is not my intention," said Premier McGuinty.

When asked point blank on January 14, even into this new year, if he would raise taxes, Dalton McGuinty said "No."

Why did the Premier continue to break his promises? What kind of man is this Premier when he knew full well he had no intention of keeping his promise?

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): Our commitment to transform health care in Ontario is what is at the centre of this budget. Our commitment to give ourselves a system of public education in Ontario that is second to none is at the core of our budget; our commitment to transform the quality of life in our communities; to start rebuilding infrastructure again; to start building public transit again; to fix the mess we were left with in Ontario Hydro and the energy system; to start to do something real for the most vulnerable in this province; to start again to bring northern Ontario into the economic growth of this province; to start, finally, to do something for people who live in rural Ontario: That is what is at the heart of our budget, and our measures gave us the capacity to pay for that, and I'm very proud of it.

Mr Hudak: As I said yesterday, nobody believes a word you say anymore. Dalton McGuinty as Premier promised one thing before the campaign and had no intention of keeping his promise. Even as Premier, he continued to say he would not raise taxes when he knew full well he was going to be raising taxes on middle-class families.

And I think you, sir, by sitting next to that man, have caught the disease of chronic promise breaking. Even within a week, or days, of your budget, you continued to say you would not be raising taxes on personal income. You know full well that in your own budget documents your new health tax is being collected through the income tax system. It is a tax on income.

Why did you continue, even up to the last days of the budget, to promise something you knew you wouldn't keep? Why should we trust a word that Dalton McGuinty says anymore?

1410

Hon Mr Sorbara: I appreciate my friend—
Interjection.

Hon Mr Sorbara: Do you think he has finished asking the question yet?

Interjection.

Hon Mr Sorbara: I appreciate my friend from Erie-Lincoln's drama in this Legislature.

Mr Hudak: No, because we're angry. You don't understand that people are angry.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. Would you allow the Minister of Finance to respond?

Hon Mr Sorbara: I understand where my friend is coming from. The anger of the people of Ontario is rooted in the eight and a half years of Conservative government, allowing the revenue base—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Sorbara: They can't get over it. We inherited a set of problems. We're in the process—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I don't think anyone is interested in the answer.

NURSING EDUCATION

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. A few moments ago, the Minister of Finance restated the budget commitment to increase the number of full-time nursing positions by 8,000. If we are to achieve this goal, Ontario needs to train more nurses. What is your ministry doing to expand undergraduate nursing education?

Hon Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the member for Mississauga West. My Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities works alongside the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care on the health human resources development strategy. This week's budget included \$45.9 million for nursing education. That's \$9.5 million more than the previous government spent on nursing education. That will represent funding for 4,000 new first-year, full-time collaborative nursing students, and that will start in 2004-05.

Mr Delaney: Thank you, Minister. It's a ray of hope for health care workers, who will welcome this news.

There's also work to be done in the area of graduate nursing education. Students in these programs go on to teach future nurses of Ontario. Minister, please tell me what this budget means for graduate nursing education in Ontario?

Hon Mrs Chambers: The budget actually unveiled a new fund, a nursing faculty fund of \$10 million for training master's and PhD nursing professionals. This will increase the level of nursing skill in this province and increase the enrolment in these graduate programs by 30% by 2007-08.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): To the Minister of Finance: The minister will know that working

families around Ontario are angry. They feel they have been misled. They feel they have been taken advantage of. They feel that they're carrying the burden of this Liberal government's breaking its promise not to raise taxes, and we are their voice in this place.

Minister, on May 12, the *Toronto Sun* quotes you as saying, "I think on other occasions I have said we are not going to adjust the rate of taxation on personal income in this province."

How can you make a statement like that and just a week later so completely break that promise? What has changed since May 12 when you made that outrageous statement?

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): The budget included an Ontario health premium. It is not linked to the rates of personal income tax. It's a unique hybrid premium that is income-g geared and is going to help pay for the plan we have to improve health care in this province. It will give us improvements in home care. It will give us improvements in long-term care. It will help us. This year, as I said earlier, 170,000 individuals under this plan will receive care who otherwise could not find a family doctor.

I want to tell you that I am very proud of that plan. Just in terms of commentary and what people are saying, I will quote, if I could, from the *Globe and Mail* editorial of May 19 in which the editorialist said, "The former Conservative government put the Liberals in an economic box with its dismal record of financial management and its unconscionable pretense that the books were nearly balanced."

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Supplementary.

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): Heads up the *Globe and Mail*.

I want to say, with respect, that there's a sort of impression among the public that this is a seat-of-the-pants government with respect to some of these initiatives.

I would like to ask the Minister of Finance, in his so-called commitment to improving health care in the province, with the fact that he's delisting services in this budget and the impact that's going to have on so many people, especially those who depend on physiotherapy and chiropractic services, and with the impact that may have in terms of the health of Ontarians and ultimately may have in increasing the health care budget for taxpayers across this province, what kind of empirical studies, what kind of studies did you undertake to assess the impact before you made the decision of, in effect, giving Ontarians less for more in terms of health care?

Hon Mr Sorbara: I say to my friend from Leeds-Grenville that it is never easy, it is never welcome to have to delist services. These are services that play an important role in the overall delivery of health care in Ontario. Make no mistake about that. In terms of physiotherapy, we've made it clear that it will continue to be delivered to seniors through long-term-care and home care facilities and to individuals who receive Ontario disability support programs. In terms of optometry, we

are going to continue to provide services for people under the age of 20 and seniors over the age of 64.

But in making choices—and government is about making difficult choices—our choice is to move resources to where they are critically needed, including reducing waiting times for joint replacements and cardiac surgery.

HEALTH CARE

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): My question is for the Minister of Finance. I think we all know that the people of Ontario have been demanding better health care for years. People are always talking to me about wait times for cancer care being too long, about seniors who want to age in place in their homes and don't have the support they need, about children who need immunization and can't get it because of the cost. Minister, can you talk to us about what specific results the health premium will deliver this year?

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I want to thank my friend for the question. We are beginning on a journey of significant transformation of our health care system. I am particularly proud of what we are going to be able to start to do with children's mental health. But in the larger areas, I think of the 3,760 additional long-term beds that will be available under the health plan. I think of the 9,000 more cardiac surgeries that are going to be done. I'm thinking of the \$60 million that will be available for bed lifts in hospitals. I'm thinking about the \$5 million to establish a cancer care innovation fund that will promote new approaches so that we can reduce waiting times for people suffering from that terrible disease.

I could go on, but perhaps I'll leave some time for a supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Good idea. Supplementary.

Ms Wynne: Thank you for those specific plans. I'm pleased that this is a four-year plan that's been laid out. I've been getting calls from people who are happy to see we're committed to better health care, but a number of constituents who called didn't know that the proposed health premiums will be on taxable income. People had the impression it was on gross income, not on income after deductions. Can you confirm that the premium will be on taxable income?

1420

Hon Mr Sorbara: My friend raises a very important question, because for many people the deductions on income resulting in taxable income will very much lower the threshold upon which the health premium is determined. For example, things like costs of child care, union and professional fees, attendant care and RRSP contributions will be deducted from income before reaching taxable income and the amount upon which the premium is calculated.

I think, though, the most important thing about this premium is that it's the first health care premium in Canada which is geared to income. Much more important

than that, it will provide the revenues necessary to provide the services that the constituents of my friend from Don Valley West need most, and that's the thing that I'm happy about.

The Speaker: New question.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have a question to the Minister of Finance. Your decision to privatize health care services will have a very serious impact on patients. Today I spoke with Dr Andrew Chung, an optometrist who delivers eye care to new immigrants and low-income people in my riding of Toronto-Danforth. Many of his patients are seamstresses who spend hours every day paying very close attention to detail in their stitching work. They make very poor wages, and because of their work they suffer significant eye strain. They are not capable of paying out of pocket for eye exams which they need.

Minister, when you chose to privatize eye care services, did you even think about the negative impact on women like these?

Hon Mr Sorbara: My friend from Toronto-Danforth has a marvellous way of shaping a question to create a somewhat distorted impression of reality. Her regrettable suggestion that we are privatizing health care is simply and thoroughly unacceptable. She knows it's not true; it ought not to be part of her preamble.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): What do you call it when you have to pay out of your own pocket for health service, you moron?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Could I ask the member for Kenora-Rainy River to withdraw that unparliamentary—

Mr Hampton: I withdraw, Speaker.

Hon Mr Sorbara: I say to my friend from Toronto, attempting as I do to ignore the outburst of the leader of that party, that what we have done is delisted a narrow band of services in a very broad band of services that continue to be covered. A routine eye examination for individuals between 20 and 64 will be delisted.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Sorbara: In response to that, sir, talking to that very same mother of two children, we provide instead free vaccines for some of the most serious diseases. Before we brought in these reforms, vaccines for chickenpox, meningitis and pneumonia, which could cost that family some \$600 to \$1,200 in a year, will now be covered by the government of Ontario.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I say to the Minister of Finance, when you pay out of your own pocket for health care, that's privatization. That's two-tier medicine. That's what you promised you weren't going to do when you went out and tried to buy the votes of electors in the last election. Now here you are cutting off health care services for people. Here you are privatizing health care services. Here you are forcing people to pay out of their own pocket for health care. They shouldn't have to, because they already pay for health care through

the tax system and they're going to pay even more because of your regressive new health tax.

These are people who cannot afford to pay out of their pocket for private rehab, private physiotherapy, private eye exams etc. You promised during the election that you were not going to privatize health care services. Will you reverse your decision to force people to pay for eye care, physiotherapy and chiropractic care to ensure that they can get the health care they need?

Hon Mr Sorbara: Just generally, I would suggest to you that the theorizing behind the question from my friend from Nickel Belt is one of the reasons her party did very poorly during their five years in government.

I want to say to you that delisting any service is a difficult decision, but with the additional revenues we garner, we are able to improve public health care; provide more public health nurses for those very families; ensure there will be shorter waiting times for critical services.

Mr Hampton: More promises. Why should anybody believe any promise a Liberal makes?

Hon Mr Sorbara: Going back to the question from my friend from Kenora-Rainy River, let us remember that Tommy Douglas, the father of medicare in this country, was one of the first to introduce health care premiums in Saskatchewan, and late in his life he lamented the fact that his health care premiums were not geared to income. Ours are, and that's great progress.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): My question is for the Minister of Finance. During the election you promised that you would not reduce health services. With the delisting of key services, you have done exactly that: You have broken your promise. By delisting key services, you have not only reduced health care but you are now forcing working families in Ontario and in my riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke to pay for those services. It is an unprecedented attack on working Ontarians, on working Ontario families. Some of those who need chiropractic and physiotherapy services need them just to continue working. Will you admit that the Liberals, who call themselves the champions of public health care, are in fact the chief architects of private, two-tier health care in Ontario?

Hon Mr Sorbara: As we implement our plan in the province, Ontario will become a Canadian and North American leader in the delivery of high-quality public health care, because we have a plan. That plan includes our ability, over the course of three years, to increase by 36,000 the number of heart procedures we're going to be able to do. We're going to be able to increase by some 2,300 the number of joint replacements we'll be able to do. We are going to put in, this year, some nine new MRI and CT sites. We are going to have some 9,000 additional cataract surgeries. For my friend to suggest that somehow this represents a diminution of the quality of health care services is absolutely unacceptable.

They do not have a plan over there. They allowed the system to deteriorate while they were in government and,

now that they are in opposition, I believe they firmly regret what they did to health care in this province.

Mr Yakabuski: Minister, the people don't believe you. They have no reason to believe you. Public opposition to this decision is growing from a muffled roar to a deafening crescendo across this province. Will you admit that this decision to delist services was wrong and commit to reconsidering that decision now so that working families who need these services and cannot afford them will not be left without health care in Ontario?

Hon Mr Sorbara: Maybe my friend's problem is that he has not read up on the history of his party. Let's take a visit. They came to power: 20,000 nurses gone; water inspectors gone; meat inspectors gone; budget for education gone. That's their legacy. That's what we inherited. That's what we're repairing. That's what is at the centre of this budget, and that's why it will be hailed by the people of the province.

1430

SENIORS' HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): My question is to the minister responsible for senior citizens. Seniors in my riding of Niagara Falls and Niagara-on-the-Lake want to know if their services will be enhanced with the new budget. In particular, they want to know about any enhancements to home care. Home care is essential to the overall quality of care in Niagara and Ontario. Not only is it more cost-effective than treating people in hospitals; it allows people to stay longer in the comfort and dignity of their own home. How will this budget improve home care for seniors?

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): I'd like to thank the member for a very relevant question. Certainly the four-year plan outlined in the budget is the key to the transformation of our health care system, and bringing care home to the people who need it is a main ingredient of that. This year, as has already been stated here today, \$88 million will be spent for additional home care services, mainly for senior citizens in their own homes. As a matter of fact, over the next four years, that figure will reach \$448 million. It's the largest expansion of the home care system in this province.

The seniors of Ontario want to stay at home as long as possible. The home care money that we're providing in this budget will allow them to do that. Over the next four years, more than 95,000 additional individuals, mainly seniors, will be getting the home care that they are not currently getting.

Mr Craiton: For too long, palliative care has been ignored in Ontario. Does the home care strategy also include funds directed to palliative care?

Hon Mr Gerretsen: I'm very pleased to say that for the first time in Ontario, thanks to the new dollars from the federal health reform fund as well, new funding will be directed to palliative care. This is consistent with our view that people should be living out the final days of

their lives with dignity and respect, either in hospital or in their own homes.

Funding for end-of-life care will rise to \$125 million per year in four years and will serve over 6,000 people. We will start this year with a \$10-million fund. That's in addition to the \$191 million that has been given to the long-term-care facilities for additional personal care and nursing care support services.

These are all initiatives to assist the senior citizens of this province to live out the final days of their lives with dignity and respect, and we're very proud of that.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): New question.

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): My question is for the minister responsible for seniors. I was intrigued by the question from the member for Niagara Falls. There are approximately 6,000 seniors living in his constituency. He just asked a question and found out from the minister that much of your entire reforms are going to be predicated on an expansion of home care for about 6,000 to 7,000 more seniors in this province.

I want to put in context the fact that what many seniors have told me over the last two days is that this is a government—and you, in particular, are a minister—that fails to understand exactly what the profile of seniors is in Ontario. There are 1.65 million seniors in this province. There are only 70,000 in long-term-care facilities. There are only 150,000 receiving home care.

Why have your tax grabs and items that you passed in November and in the May budget, which was tabled two days ago, been a direct attack on the 1.5 million remaining seniors in this province?

Hon Mr Gerretsen: What the member is suggesting couldn't be further from the truth. What we are suggesting is that over 6,000 individuals in this province will be receiving palliative care. We're also saying that over the next four years, an additional 95,700 individuals, mainly seniors, who are not currently getting home care services will be getting those services. They will be individuals who will be released from hospital, who either need post-acute-care help or who are suffering from chronic care situations in their own homes. What this member is suggesting as to what we're doing to seniors simply is not the truth. The truth is that over 95,000 individuals will be getting home care over the next four years who are not getting it right now.

Mr Jackson: It's very clear that what you're doing couldn't be further from the truth, by your own statements. It couldn't be further from the truth. We asked you about mandatory retirement, which you agree with. Now we know it's so you can tax seniors longer and further into their retirement years. We know the truth is that when your Premier told teachers in this province that they would get more for education, it was because he was prepared to take away from other programs.

The problem is, seniors in this province didn't think their health care would be your first target. You have targeted seniors to remove their physiotherapy services, their chiropractic services. These people have no protection.

One of the interesting calls I got was from a hydro retiree. He is convinced that his plan is going to cover all these expenses that you've downloaded on to seniors. We need some assurances that you're going to do something, that you at least, as the minister, recognize how vulnerable 1.5 million seniors are, not just from your hydro increases, your tax increases and the delisting of health services, but you're creating two-tier health services for retirees and for people who still have jobs in this province. What are you going to do about it?

Hon Mr Gerretsen: As the member well knows, physiotherapy services will still be available for seniors over 64 in exactly the same way as before. He knows that eye examinations will be available for them as well if they're over 64. He also knows that as part of the budget they will be given an additional \$125 per year in a property tax credit. You may recall, Speaker, that they were the ones who gave the seniors the huge property tax credit when the seniors themselves said, "We don't want it. Put it into health care and education."

That's exactly what we're doing in this budget. The over \$2.4 billion in premiums in our health care budget will be to a large extent going to seniors, because we know that the senior population needs the health care dollars more than any other group in our society. There are 95,000 seniors who are not getting home care right now and who need home care right now who will be getting that over the next four years with the \$448 million of additional money for home care in our budget.

OCCUPATIONAL DISEASE

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): My question is for the Minister of Labour. Sarnia's occupational health clinic for Ontario workers was established in 1999 to respond to needs of injured workers and occupational disease in my riding. The Sarnia OHCOW has proven to be a great benefit to injured workers in my riding, providing assistance to those affected. This clinic has become a tremendous resource in the complex field of occupational disease.

Since 1999, I, along with many community members, have been fighting to have permanent funding status for this clinic. Can you update the House on the details of the permanent status of the clinic?

Hon Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): I am very pleased to take this question from the member for Sarnia-Lambton. On the 14th of this month, I was delighted to be in Sarnia to make an announcement that the member has been fighting for for years, that the mayor has been fighting for for years and that the provincial Liberals have been fighting for for years, and that is to make the Sarnia-Lambton OHCOW a permanent member of the OHCOW family.

The work that has been done in that clinic, in the area of occupational disease in particular, has been so valuable, so important. It is a success story. It is supported by all members of the community, business and labour, provincial and municipal. It is doing such important

work. Not only will it receive permanent status but stable funding, so they can continue the good work for Sarnia-Lambton and the workers in the future.

1440

Ms Di Cocco: Minister, the announcement was welcome and long overdue. In the past, my community watched while previous labour ministers ignored the issue and would not commit to the permanent funding for this clinic.

Occupational disease is a terrible condition that's devastating families. What else are you doing to protect Ontario workers from occupational disease?

Hon Mr Bentley: Again, the member from Sarnia-Lambton has been leading the fight in this area and in many different areas, not only in the occupational disease area but also in the environmental area.

Let me inform the House what else we're doing. First of all, the WSIB is involved in a review of the structure and the framework for the resolution of occupational disease issues. I expect to receive information about that toward the end of the summer or in early fall, and will be able to build on that information.

Second, recently we announced a new way of improving the occupational exposure limit assessment process in the province of Ontario. The occupational exposure limits to potentially hazardous substances in workplaces that were reviewed entirely in 1986 and not again until 1999. What we announced was a regular review of the exposure limits to protect all workers with up-to-date medical and scientific information. But that's not all. We also announced the hiring of 25 inspectors, and we also announced—

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

COURT BACKLOG

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have a question for the Minister of Finance. Yesterday there was a shocking court decision in the Galassi case in Hamilton. The judge threw out a case of sexual assault, assault causing bodily harm, assault with a weapon and three other serious counts against a police officer. The victim of the alleged assault was the officer's former partner. The judge said he threw out the case because of what he called intolerable and unconstitutional delays in bringing the officer to trial. Lenore Lukasik-Foss, of the Sexual Assault Centre of Hamilton, says her group is "deeply distressed and outraged," and I'm sure we all are. Minister, will your government appeal this terrible decision?

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I note the absence of the Attorney General, attending the funeral in Cobourg today, so perhaps what we'll do is take the member's question as notice.

I understand the extent of her work personally in these areas. I know that she follows them very carefully. I understand where she's coming from on the question. But I wouldn't want to comment on whether or not the crown

would appeal. I would leave that to the Attorney General for further comment. Although we're not here next week, it may well be that the Attorney General would get a copy of Hansard and respond directly to my friend from Toronto-Danforth.

Ms Churley: Thank you very much for that response, Minister. I will take it up with the Attorney General, because I'm sure we would all agree that it should be appealed.

I have another question for you. After reading your budget, I'm afraid we're going to have more cases like this thrown out of court, and that is unacceptable. You do have more money this year to clear court backlogs, but by the end of your term the justice budget will have dropped by 8% after inflation. That means that court programs will be slashed as a result. That will mean more delays in getting to court, which is why the judge said this case was thrown out, and more women who are assaulted seeing their assailants getting off scot-free. That could lead to more women being murdered, and that is unacceptable. So I'm asking, Minister, will you admit that your budget won't provide the money our justice system needs, and do something about it?

Hon Mr Sorbara: No, I wouldn't admit any such thing. I would say to her that we are making significant increases in community—

Ms Churley: But it's going to drop again.

Hon Mr Sorbara: I know that she wants to hear the answer.

We are making significant increases to services for women who are the victims of domestic violence. We are providing additional money for shelter for women who must escape their homes to avoid violence. I tell her as well that the Attorney General's ministry, over the course of the next four years and in accordance with our plans, will be making dramatic changes so that we can get better results with the resources we have. I want to tell my friend for Toronto-Danforth that we have to hold our expenses in this province to a rate that is less than the growth of our revenues. That's the only way we're going to balance the books, and we're going to do that. I want to tell my friend that I understand the problems in Hamilton, and I know we are going to resolve them.

AGRICULTURE PROGRAMS

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): To the Minister of Agriculture and Food: Yesterday we heard you stand in this House and defend your government's betrayal of Ontario's farmers by saying the removal of \$128 million from the ministry's budget was due to programs that had run their course. You attributed a 20% reduction in the ministry budget to the end of healthy futures and the BSE funding. But I didn't see anything in the budget about replacing those programs. They seem to have just disappeared. A reduction of \$128 million doesn't give you any room to put replacement programs in place. It does give your urban colleagues 128 million extra

programming dollars, however. I guess the beef farmers are just out of luck.

Minister, will you stand up for rural Ontario today and demand the Premier return those programming dollars to you so Ontario farmers will not suffer further hardship at the hands of your government?

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): The commitment of this government to rural Ontario is unprecedented, and I think that's demonstrated most clearly by the \$900 million that has been allocated to rural Ontario for infrastructure. As well, we're committed to working with the agricultural community on the transition as we move to the new generation of safety nets in this province. There's \$173 million in transition funding that is going to be there. Those are dollars that will be going to the agricultural community in the province.

As well, for the first time in years, there is an increase in capital spending in the Ministry of Agriculture and Food. As I've had the opportunity to review the budget in the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, what is so disturbing is that capital dollars the previous government had allocated, they didn't spend. They made a promise. A promise made, and a promise not kept. We're going to allocate new dollars to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food that are going to benefit the farmers in this province.

Mr Hardeman: Yesterday you suggested that I shouldn't question your removal of millions of dollars from the ministry's budget because of what happened when I was the minister. I will admit that we found more efficient ways of delivering some programs, but those dollars did not leave agriculture in Ontario. We simply took programs once administered by the ministry and turned them into arms-length agricultural agencies.

With your budget, \$128 million has disappeared—no replacement programs, no increase in funding for promises kept. Minister, please tell me where those dollars went and why you were totally ignored at the cabinet table. Or did you not even fight for the farmers? Are you still fighting for the farmers, or have you just given up on their behalf?

Hon Mr Peters: I just have to laugh. I could tell you—

Mr Hardeman: It's not funny.

Hon Mr Peters: I have not given up, and this government has not given up. I think the commitment from the Premier on down has been demonstrated very clearly: This is a government that is committed to working with the agricultural community.

There's a commitment in this budget for \$120 million a year to support the agricultural community through safety net programs. There are additional dollars going to the agricultural community through the other four pillars of the agricultural policy framework. That agricultural policy framework is going to bring almost \$670 million into this province. Some of the programs: \$45 million for the healthy futures program that has come to an end; \$64 million in the bridge funding that has come to an end.

These dollars are no longer part of the budget. We are going to be working through the agricultural policy framework to make sure we deliver good programs and, more importantly, safety net programs—

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

1450

PETITIONS

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): “To the Parliament of Ontario:

“Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty promised to create 150 new family health teams in Ontario during the last provincial election; and

“Whereas Lanark-Carleton MPP Norm Sterling strongly endorses a local proposal for the creation of a new community health centre to serve Kanata, West Carleton and Goulbourn, as this area is one of the fastest-growing communities in all of Canada and the community health centre will mean improved access to quality health care for local families;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

“That the provincial government move quickly to fulfill its promise to create 150 family health teams and establish a new community health centre to serve Kanata, West Carleton, Goulbourn and the surrounding area, and that the Western Ottawa Community Resource Centre (formerly known as the Community Resource Centre of Goulbourn, Kanata and West Carleton) proposal which is currently before the Ministry of Health be approved.”

I sign this, as I agree with it.

NATUROPATHIC MEDICINE

Ms Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): I have a petition to the Premier of Ontario, Dalton McGuinty, honourable ministers and members of Parliament.

“We, the undersigned, are eager to see our health care system strengthened and the health care of choice made available to all who live in Ontario

“We implore the Legislative Assembly for the province of Ontario, its ministers and its members, to use their offices to immediately amend the Regulated Health Professions Act in order to permit registered nurses to take orders from naturopathic doctors in order to act effectively as a medical team and provide the care and treatments these health professionals and their patients feel appropriate and necessary.”

AJAX-PICKERING HOSPITAL

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly. I will be presenting the first thousand of those this afternoon, with

more to follow. This is signed by Jill Mason, past chair of the board of the Ajax-Pickering General Hospital. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas at the time the Centenary Health Centre and Ajax-Pickering hospitals amalgamated under the umbrella of the Rouge Valley Health System, a commitment was made by the Health Services Restructuring Commission that the communities of Whitby/Pickering/Ajax, according to the amalgamation agreement, would not lose a full-service hospital and would maintain all existing services; and

“Whereas municipal governments in the region of Durham have provided financial support to the Rouge Valley Health System on the understanding that Ajax-Pickering hospital would continue as a full-service hospital; and

“Whereas numerous service clubs and other organizations have also raised money in support of the expansion of the Ajax-Pickering hospital and services provided therein such as the maternity unit on the understanding that the Ajax-Pickering hospital would continue as a full-service facility; and

“Whereas the Rouge Valley Health System has changed its strategic plan without consulting its key stakeholders, such as the residents who use the hospital, the doctors, nurses and other professional staff that work within the system and the local governments and organizations that fund the hospital; and

“Whereas this has led to a decrease in the level of service provided by the maternity unit and the number of acute care beds;

“We, the undersigned concerned citizens of west Durham, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That a full-service hospital with all the existing services at the time of amalgamation be maintained at the Ajax-Pickering site and new services added as the population continues to grow and age, as agreed to by the Ajax-Pickering General Hospital and Centenary Health Centre in the amalgamation agreement signed May 31, 1998.”

CHIROPRACTIC HEALTH CARE

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas over 1.2 million people use chiropractic services every year in the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas those who use chiropractic services consider this an important part of their health care and rely on these services along with the OHIP funding in order to function; and

“Whereas the elimination or reduction of chiropractic services would be viewed as breaking the promise not to reduce universal access to health care; and

“Whereas by eliminating or reducing OHIP coverage of chiropractic services, where the patient pays part of the cost, will end up costing the government far more in

additional physician, emergency department and hospital visits;

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

“That the Parliament of Ontario does not delist chiropractic services from the Ontario health insurance plan, and that assurance is given that funding for chiropractic services not be reduced or eliminated.”

It is signed by many people from my riding.

PRIMARY CARE

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

“Whereas the community of Peterborough is suffering a crisis in terms of accessibility to health care, brought on by the severe and growing shortage of family physicians; and

“Whereas the community of Peterborough has demonstrated extraordinarily strong local leadership in developing a proposal for primary care reform which is very innovative and will provide access to primary care for the growing list of more than 20,000 residents in our community without a family physician; and

“Whereas this proposal has been endorsed by the county of Peterborough, the city of Peterborough, the Peterborough County Medical Society, the Peterborough Community Care Access Centre, the Peterborough Regional Health Centre and the Peterborough County-City Health Unit;

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

“To work with representatives of the local community to ensure that all residents of Peterborough have access to an appropriate primary care provider through the timely implementation of the proposed integrated primary care model, as this model provides appropriate and equitable compensation for family physicians while incorporating sufficient interdisciplinary health care providers, community linkages and appropriate administrative infrastructure and information technology supports to enable health care professionals to enjoy a more realistic, healthy work-life balance.”

I’ll affix my signature to it.

CHIROPRACTIC HEALTH CARE

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas over 1.2 million people use chiropractic services every year in the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas those who use chiropractic services consider this an important part of their health care and rely on these services along with the OHIP funding in order to function; and

“Whereas the elimination or reduction of chiropractic services would be viewed as breaking the promise not to reduce universal access to health care; and

“Whereas by eliminating or reducing OHIP coverage of chiropractic services, where the patient pays part of the cost, will end up costing the government far more in additional physician, emergency department and hospital visits;

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

“That the Parliament of Ontario does not delist chiropractic services from the Ontario health insurance plan, and that assurance is given that funding for chiropractic services not be reduced or eliminated.”

I support this petition, and I affix my name to it.

IMMIGRANTS’ SKILLS

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

“Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

“Whereas Ontario, its businesses, its people and its institutions badly need the professional, managerial and technical skills that many newcomers to Canada have and want to use;

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

“That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the other institutions and agencies of and within the government of Ontario, undertake specific and proactive measures to work with the bodies regulating access to Ontario’s professions, trades and other occupations in order that newcomers to Canada gain fair, timely and cost-effective access to certification and other measures that facilitate the entry or re-entry of skilled workers and professionals trained outside Canada into the Canadian workforce.”

PHYSICIAN SHORTAGE

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Our community is facing an immediate, critical situation in accessing physician services.

“While the recruitment and retention of physicians has been a concern for many years, it is now reaching crisis proportions.

“Training more physicians in Ontario is certainly the best response to this problem in the longer term. We are, however, in urgent need of support for immediate short-term solutions that will allow our community both to retain our current physicians and recruit new family

doctors and specialists in seriously understaffed areas. Foreign-trained physicians may help us to respond to this need.

"Therefore we, as the residents of Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, urge you to respond to our community's and our region's critical and immediate needs. For us, this is truly a matter of life and death."

It's signed by many people from my riding.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Ms Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas seniors and other qualified patients require the continued provision of physiotherapy services through schedule 5 clinics to promote recovery from medical conditions and continued mobility and good health;

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

"The patients of schedule 5 physiotherapy clinics request the continued support of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario for provision of OHIP-covered physiotherapy treatment to qualified seniors and others in need of these vital health care procedures."

1500

SMALL BUSINESS TAX RELIEF

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): "Stay the Course on Small Business Tax Relief.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas business tax cuts have helped fuel the strongest economic and job growth ever seen in Canada; and

"Whereas corporate income taxes on the smaller businesses that create most of our new jobs have been scheduled to be reduced to 5% in 2004 and 4% in 2005; and

"Whereas the corporate income tax rate for manufacturing and processing firms has been scheduled to be cut to 10% for 2004, 9% in 2005 and 8% in 2006; and

"Whereas the general corporate income tax rate has been scheduled to be 11% for 2004, 9.5% for 2005 and 8% for 2006; and

"Whereas the capital tax on employers is on the road to be cut by 10% in 2004, with the plan to scrap it entirely;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario stay the course and maintain the scheduled tax reductions for job-creating businesses."

GO TRANSIT

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from a

group of commuters in the Lisgar and Meadowvale area of Mississauga.

"Whereas the city of Mississauga has, within a generation, grown from a linked collection of suburban and farming communities into Canada's sixth-largest city, and tens of thousands of people daily need to commute into and out of Mississauga in order to do business, educate themselves and their families and enjoy culture and recreation; and

"Whereas gridlock on all roads leading into and out of Mississauga makes peak period road commuting impractical, and commuter rail service on the Milton GO line is restricted to morning and afternoon service into and out of Toronto; and

"Whereas residents of western Mississauga need to commute to commute, driving along traffic-clogged roads to get to overflowing parking lots at the Meadowvale, Streetsville and Erindale GO train stations;

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

"That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Transportation and highways, instruct GO Transit to allocate sufficient resources from its 2004-05 capital budget to proceed immediately with the acquisition of land and construction of a new GO train station, called Lisgar, at Tenth Line and the rail tracks, to alleviate the parking congestion, and provide better access to GO train service on the Milton line for residents of western Mississauga."

As one of those residents, I am pleased to affix my signature and to have Conor carry it up for me.

PROPERTY TAXATION

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

"Whereas recreational trailers kept at parks and campgrounds in Ontario are being assessed by the Municipal Property Assessment Corp (MPAC) and are subject to property taxes; and

"Whereas owners of these trailers are seasonal and occasional residents who contribute to the local tourism economy without requiring significant municipal services; and

"Whereas the added burden of this taxation will make it impossible for many families of modest income to afford their holiday sites at parks and campgrounds;

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

"That these seasonal trailers not be subject to retroactive taxation for the year 2003; that the tax not be imposed in 2004; and that no such tax be introduced without consultation with owners of the trailers and trailer parks, municipal governments, businesses, the tourism sector and other stakeholders."

I'll affix my signature to this.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I would like to draw your attention to the Speaker's gallery. We have with us today Her Excellency Theresa Solomon, High Commissioner for the Republic of South Africa to Canada. Please join me in warmly welcoming her here today.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2004 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 19, 2004, on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): The leader of the third party.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I must say I look forward to having to say a few words about this budget. I said, when it was introduced, that I believe it is the most regressive budget ever introduced in the history of Ontario, and I want to talk about that just for a few minutes, because over the past few days I've had the opportunity to do an even more detailed examination of this budget.

I'll go into the issue of broken promises later, because I think many people across Ontario are very concerned, and rightfully so, about a Premier who would look into the television camera and say, "I won't raise your taxes," and then turn around and hit ordinary middle- and modest-income working Ontarians with a \$3-billion tax grab. Many people are quite naturally concerned about that, and they should be concerned about that.

But I want to really go through the details of the budget, because what is so regressive about this is that, first of all, if you go through this budget, there is not one tax increase on the corporate sector in Ontario. I read that Bay Street was very happy about this budget. I know why Bay Street is so happy. I know why the coupon clippers and the folks at Nortel who screw around with the books are happy with this budget. I know why the Frank Stronachs and their \$52-million-a-year incomes are happy with this budget. It's because not one cent of the \$3-billion tax increase is going to come from the Frank Stronachs or the Nortels or the banks or the Enrons—not one cent.

After saying they were not going to increase taxes on working families, the Liberals have brought forward a budget which takes \$3 billion out of the pockets of working families and lets the Bay Street corporations and the \$52-million-a-year Frank Stronachs whistle all the way to the bank. That's the definition of regressive, when you go after hard-working people, people in many cases who are trying to work at two or three jobs to pay the rent and put food on the table, and say to them, "We want another 2% of your income," and yet you say to the Frank Stronachs, "Hey, man, we're on your side. We

don't want you to pay any taxes. We don't want Magna to pay any additional taxes. Nortel, we know you've been screwing around with the books, but we don't want you to pay any additional taxes." That is what is so unfair about this. It is so regressive. It is so unbalanced. It goes after the wrong people, and it goes after them in spades.

The Premier and the Minister of Finance stand up here and say, "Well, we had no choice." I think people across Ontario recognize that when the Conservatives were the government, individuals who had an income of \$100,000 or more got a 35% tax reduction. With a \$52-million-a-year income, Frank Stronach's taxes were cut by 25%. Do you know what that means? It means that he pocketed millions of dollars just through that tax cut. People with incomes of \$100,000 a year or more got a 35% tax cut. You know what I think? I think a government that was interested in fairness or balance or maybe a little bit of equality or equity could have gone to those individuals who have the very high incomes and said, "Look, you got the massive tax cut. We need to invest money in health care and in education. You got the huge tax cut. It's time for you to make a greater contribution once again."

1510

Did the Liberals do that? No. Under their health tax, the Liberals are going to say to Frank Stronach, with a \$52-million income, "Frank, can you spare us \$900 a year?" Meanwhile, the Liberals are going to go to a hard-working family where the husband has an income of, say, \$49,000 a year, and the wife has an income of \$49,000 a year, and say, "It's \$1,200 a year out of your pocket." I know that Mr McGuinty is character-challenged, and I understand now that he is challenged by numbers as well. It seems to me that when somebody who has a massive income, like Frank Stronach, is only going to make a \$900 contribution under this tax, while a middle-income couple—maybe he's a teacher and maybe she's a nurse—is going to have to pay \$1,200, I know one thing: That's unfair. That's grossly unfair. But according to the new Liberal version of Ontario, this is the way it's going to be.

It's even more unbalanced than that, as some of my colleagues pointed out here today. In my riding there are a lot of people who do heavy work. They work in the mines; they work in the forests; they work in the paper mill, the pulp mill, the sawmill. It's tough, physical work. Many of them have to go to a chiropractor, not just once a year but 10, 11, 12 times a year. In order to be able to go to work the next day, they have to be able to do that. What does the government say to them now when they have to go to a chiropractor to be able to work, contribute and participate in society? What do the Liberals say? The Liberals say, "You pay for those health services out of your own pocket."

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Private health care.

Mr Hampton: Private health care.

I just heard the Minister of Finance say that that's all fine and wonderful in a Liberal Ontario. In fact, he laughed when we gave him examples: poor immigrant women in downtown Toronto who work as seamstresses,

who, in many cases, work 12 or 15 hours a day in work that requires real precision of eyesight. Women like that have to have their eyes checked once in a while to keep their jobs. They have to be able to go and see an optometrist. What does the Liberal government say to them? "You pay out of your own pocket." Frank Stronach's contribution to the health care system: \$900 a year under the Liberal health tax. For these women, I bet going to see the optometrist plus what they will have to pay out of the unbalanced, regressive, unfair health tax will probably be just about equal to Frank Stronach's \$900. The Minister of Finance laughed at that example. He thinks that is a trivial matter in his Ontario.

The Liberal government had still other choices. I just gave you the example of those high-income individuals who have incomes of over \$100,000 a year, the people who got a 25% tax cut—a 35% tax cut under the Conservatives. I ought to be careful: a 35% tax cut under the Conservatives. The Liberals aren't saying to those people, "You have to make a greater contribution."

There's another example: We have the dedicated employer health tax in this province. The dedicated employer health tax basically says that all employers have to make a contribution toward health care based on the size of their payroll. One of the things the Conservatives did for the largest corporations, the wealthiest corporations—once again, the Nortels, who wouldn't know an honest balance sheet if it jumped up and slapped them on the end of the nose—a \$700-million exemption from the employer health tax. I think a Liberal government that had even a sliver of interest in fairness, balance and equality would have gone to those corporations and said, "You know, you got a huge tax cut: \$700 million a year. Now that it's time to contribute once again to health care, you have to give that back." But did the Liberals do that? No. The Liberals endorsed the very loophole; the very discredited, dishonourable loophole that the Conservatives put in place, the Liberals are going to continue with.

Every once in a while I love listening to Mr McGuinty and some of the Conservatives talk about the phantom corporate tax cuts that were supposed to happen next year, the year after and the year after that. You see, those tax cuts didn't happen. Yes, they may have happened in 2005, some may have happened in 2006 and they may have happened in 2007, but the fact is that we're in 2004 and they haven't happened yet.

But Liberals brought a bill in here last fall that said, "OK, those proposed tax cuts are off," and they want to pretend that somehow that's real money for them. They want people to partake in this fantasy about whether a tax cut that might happen in 2008 or 2009 is real money in 2004.

I just refuse to take part in that phony—and I say again, phony—exercise. We're talking about real health care, we're talking about real people in this province who need health care today, and they don't have time for any phony exercise about tax cuts that might have happened

in 2008-09 between Mr McGuinty and whichever Conservative he happens to be talking about.

The reality is, the corporate tax rate in this province used to be 15.5% on the income of corporations. The Conservatives reduced that. Have the Liberals returned it to 15.5%? No. If the Liberals had increased it, just returned it to the level it was at in the late 1990s, when every corporation in this province was making money hand over fist—had they just done that—it would have been at least another \$650 million that could have gone toward health care. Did they do that? No. The Liberals went after modest-income and middle-income working families and said, "You pay it all."

I say again that this is the most regressive budget, in terms of its financial impact on modest- and middle-income working families, that this province has ever seen. I just think it's atrocious that somebody who has an income of \$50,000 or \$60,000 a year is being told, "You and your wife, because your income together approaches \$100,000, have to pay \$1,200." Yet the wealthiest corporations in this province, the wealthiest ones, are told by this government, "You don't have to make any additional contribution to health care." I just think that's atrocious.

When you read the fine print of the budget, you find that the wealthiest of the wealthy in this province are actually getting another tax cut. The wealthiest of the wealthy corporations in this province are actually getting another tax cut. I'm talking here about the banks. I invite you and other Ontarians simply to get the latest list of corporate profits for the banks, and it will scare you, because they are really quite something—unbelievable, in fact: not just a billion dollars, but we're talking about dozens of billions of dollars. And do you know what? The banks are going to get another tax cut. It's called the capital tax.

The way the capital tax works is this: When a bank has \$40 billion or \$50 billion on deposit, that's a lot of wealth. I think you'd admit that's a lot of wealth. That's more wealth than most Ontarians will ever dream of. When somebody is holding that amount of wealth on deposit, it should be subject to some kind of tax. After all, if you're going to say to some poor person who has an income of \$49,000 a year that they've got to kick in \$600 out of their hard-earned income, I think banks that are holding deposits of \$70 billion, \$80 billion, \$90 billion could afford to pay just a little tax on that.

But do you know what's happening here? Under the Liberal government, the banks, the wealthiest of the wealthy corporations in Ontario, are going to get a reduction in the capital tax. In fact, it's going to be eliminated. Do you know what that means? It means another billion-dollar loss, a billion dollars that banks and financial institutions used to contribute that would have been available for health care, the Liberals are going to give away. But at the same time, hard-working, modest- and middle-income families are being told, "You pay it all, \$3 billion worth of this government's regressive and unbalanced health care tax."

1520

Maybe Mr McGuinty and Mr Sorbara could put together some kind of half-baked argument to justify taxing modest- and middle-income families, but do you know what? When you're not going to tax the banks—you're going to give the banks a tax break—when you're not going to tax the highest-income people, who got a 35% tax reduction under the Conservatives, when you're not going to plug the \$700-million loophole in the employer health tax which allows the largest corporations in the province to stuff more money in their pockets, when you're not going to restore corporate taxes to the level they were at in the late 1990s, when corporations in Ontario were doing quite fine, thank you, when you're not going to do any of those measures, then you can't go to struggling modest- and middle-income Ontarians and say to them, "You pay it all. You pay \$3 billion worth."

But it's worse than that, because it's not just the health tax. When you look at the hydro bill, this government that wants to talk about integrity and wants to talk about how the rules need to be very clear and the accounting has to be very clear has just engaged in the kind of nefarious activity that people from Enron are going to jail for, what I call the hydro shuffle. What they're doing is claiming \$3.9 billion of income on hydro contracts that are now going to be pushed on to people's hydro bills and that people will pay for over the next 15 years, at about \$300 million a year. It's a completely paper transaction, the kind of paper transaction that Enron engaged in to inflate their revenues and make it look as if they were rolling in the money. It's a complete paper transaction, a paper shuffle. But do you know what it's going to do to working families? Up goes the hydro bill again. Up goes the hydro bill by at least another \$20 a year, \$30 a year, on top of the 20% increase in the hydro bill that Liberals have already pushed on to working families. So not only are working families going to be told, "We want an extra \$1,200 out of your wallet for this unbalanced, unfair health tax," but then they want another \$30 out of the wallet for the hydroelectricity shuffle, the Liberals' hydro shuffle, the Enron shuffle.

People in many parts of our province need a driver's licence to be able to drive. That goes up. Who does that hit? Do you think that hurts Mr Stronach? Do you think Frank Stronach, at \$52 million a year, is going to be terribly pained by having to pay another \$25 or \$50 a year for the driver's licence? I don't think so. But let me tell you, for modest- and middle-income working families, who are getting hit by the health tax and the hydro bill, it will hurt them again.

I want people to know that it's not just the driver's licence fee and it's not just the small claims court fee that are going up. There are a whole bunch of other fee increases, \$65 million worth of fee increases, that are also scheduled. But do you know when those are going to be made open to the public? In the middle of summer. They're not going to announce those now, but things like fishing licence fees, hunting licence fees, birth certificate fees, change-of-name certificate fees and death certificate

fees are all going to be increased this summer too, to the tune of \$65 million.

Now, is Frank Stronach, at \$52 a million a year, going to get exercised about that? I don't think so. But hard-working modest- and middle-income families are going to be hurt very badly by this. This is the Liberal definition of balance, the Liberal definition of fairness, the Liberal definition of equity and equality: Go after the working people, and go after them with a vengeance.

It's sad to say this, but last fall, Dalton McGuinty was going to those working people, going to the front door and saying, "Working people of Ontario, vote for me." Now, seven months later, he's going to sneak in the back door and take their money. That's what's going on here. That's exactly what's going on. But it doesn't end there, Speaker. You remember that the government said they were going to reduce auto insurance rates by 20%. Well, for working families the auto insurance rates aren't going down by 20%, they're not going down by 10% and they're not going down by 5%. Working families across this province continue to see double-digit increases in their auto insurance premiums—across this province, double-digit increases.

Here's the situation of most working families: The hydro bill goes up, the natural gas bill goes up, the food bill goes up, the auto insurance bill goes up and now health insurance. If they need to see a chiropractor, they pay out of their own pocket. If they need to get their eyes tested at the optometrist, they pay out of their own pocket. That is the situation now, under a Liberal government that had the audacity—the Premier had the audacity to look into the television camera and say to working families, "I won't raise your taxes." And who is he going after? The very people to whom he said, "I won't raise your taxes."

Do a little quick math. Put yourself in the position of that family, where maybe he's a teacher making \$50,000 a year, and let's say she's a nurse making \$50,000 a year. Right off the top there's \$1,200 a year out of their pockets for this tax increase that they're trying to disguise as a health premium. The hydro bill has already gone up by about another \$40. Now they're going to add another \$20 or \$30. If this family has to go to the chiropractor four or five times a year, tack on another \$200. If they have to have their eyes checked by an optometrist, maybe once a year, tack on another \$100; driver's licence, another \$50; all the other fee increases that are coming, the \$65-million worth that are coming, another \$50 there. Add it up: \$1,200, \$1,400, \$1,500, \$1,600, \$1,700 a year. That's what the Liberal government is taking out of the pockets of modest- and middle-income people as a result of this budget.

What are the banks paying? Nada. They're getting a \$1-billion tax reduction. What are all those people who have incomes over \$100,000 a year and got the 35% Conservative tax cut paying? Next to nada. All those corporations that got the \$700-million windfall as a result of the Conservative loophole in the employer health tax—the largest corporations in Ontario—what are they

paying? Nada. The corporations who benefited from the reduction in the corporate tax rate from 15.5%, which is what it used to be: What are they paying in this budget? Nada. Not a cent. All \$3 billion a year is landing on the backs of modest-income and middle-income working families across this province. I say that's unfair. I say that's unbalanced. In fact, I say that's disgusting. That is why this is the most regressive budget ever visited on working families, on modest- and middle-income families in this province.

The average person might be saying, "How can this be?" I think if people want to review a little bit of history, this is in fact the dynamic of the Liberal Party: Promise all kinds of things before the election and do the exact opposite after the election. That is the dynamic of the Liberal Party.

Promise people: "Hey, we know auto insurance rates are too high. We're going to lower them by 20%." What do people get? They get a 20% increase. Promise people, as Mr McGuinty did, to maintain the Conservative rate freeze on electricity prices, and then within two weeks of the election, say, "No, I'm not going to do that," and people's hydro bills go up.

Promise people you're going to do away with private hospitals, the P3 hospitals. We know from British experience and the experience of New Zealand and Nova Scotia that if you look at them 10 years later, they cost double to build and operate. Promise people, as Mr McGuinty did, that you're going to do away with those before the election and then, after the election, change a couple of words in the contract, but otherwise the private hospitals proceed under the Liberals just as they were going to proceed under the Conservatives.

Promise people you're not going allow 6,000 units of development on the Oak Ridges moraine, and then after the election, say, "Oh, well, we're going to protect a smidgen; 5,700 units can proceed."

1530

Then there's the national child tax benefit, which was supposed to go to the lowest-income families with children. Before the election, Liberals said, "We're going to stop the clawback. All of that money will go to those families, 100% of that money will go to the poorest of poor working families." After the election: "No, never heard of that promise."

They were going to take all the federal money that was designated for child care—I think when you add it all up it comes to close to \$300 million federally—and before the election promised that all of that would go to child care. After the election, \$58 million will go to child care; the rest, didn't hear of it. Promise that there will be \$300 million a year of provincial money for child care, and then after the election, nada, not a cent of provincial money for child care.

Perhaps the most egregious broken promise of all: Go to the parents of children who suffer from autism and say to them that if a Liberal government is elected, those children will not be cut off IBI autism treatment at age six, they will not be discriminated against, and they will

continue to receive IBI autism treatment as long as it is helpful and useful to them. Make that promise, and then after the election pretend that those children don't even exist, pretend that those children who struggle with one of hardest handicaps, and who can be helped, don't even exist, that they didn't exist.

That is the *modus operandi* of Mr McGuinty and the Liberal Party, and I dare say that is the *modus operandi* of someone named Paul Martin as well: Promise everything before the election, and after the election is over, break all your promises, deny you ever made them.

People should recognize that is how Liberals operate. If I may, that's one of the reasons I think people across Ontario and across Canada increasingly have grown cynical about politics, when they see this kind of behaviour.

I want to roll back the clock a bit. One of the excuses Mr McGuinty uses is that there is a deficit. He says there's a deficit. I sat in the estimates committee last year in June. Eleven months ago I sat in the estimates committee with Mr Phillips, who is now the Chair of Management Board, and we both questioned the former Minister of Finance, Janet Ecker. I added up all the areas of the budget where it was obvious the former government didn't have the money, where they weren't getting revenue or they were going to have extra costs. I added it up and said, "It looks to me like you've got a \$5-billion deficit."

Mr Phillips, now Chair of Management Board, said exactly the same thing. He looked at Mrs Ecker and said, "Looking at it now, in June 2003, I think you're really at risk of a \$5-billion deficit."

You'd think that a prudent Premier or a prudent leader of a political party would say, "Boy, if there's a risk of \$5-billion deficit, maybe we shouldn't promise to do all these things without raising taxes." But did that stop Mr McGuinty? No. He promised that there would be billions of dollars of investment for health care and education and children and municipalities and the environment—and no tax increase—knowing that there was a likelihood of a \$5-billion deficit on top of that.

The now minister of public security, Mr Kwinter, said in August to Canadian Press, "There's a \$5-billion deficit." The Fraser Institute, which the Minister of Finance often cites when he wants to disagree with me over auto insurance premiums, said in the first two weeks of the election, "There's at least \$4.6-billion deficit."

I knew there was a deficit, Mr Phillips knew there was a deficit, Mr Kwinter knew there was a deficit and the Fraser Institute knew there was a deficit, yet Mr McGuinty went across the province saying to people, "Billions of dollars for health care, billions of dollars for education; no tax increases."

I don't know what Liberals call that, but I call that a complete black-and-white, out-and-out contradiction. You can't have a \$4-billion deficit or a \$5-billion deficit and tell people that you're going to invest billions in health care and billions in education and not raise taxes. You can't do it, but you did. You did. You went out there

and told people things that you knew were not factually true. Now you come to people and say to them, "Oh, you know there's not enough money for health care." You knew then that there wasn't enough money for health care. You knew then there wasn't enough money.

That's bad enough, but most egregious of all, whom do they go after for the \$3 billion? They don't go after the wealthiest, not the corporations that got the tax loopholes, not the banks; they go after modest- and middle-income Ontarians, modest- and middle-income working families who are struggling hard just to pay the other bills.

There's no secret about why this budget is so unpopular—no secret. They tried to say, "You know, there are going to be more nurses and more of this and more of that." Do you know what I say? After all of these broken promises, after all of these so obviously broken promises, why should any person in Ontario believe any promise any Liberal makes? Do you know what? I've asked that question of Mr McGuinty for the last two days and I've asked that question of Mr Sorbara, and they can't answer, probably because they don't have an answer. Certainly they don't want to try to answer it. Why would any Ontarian believe any promise any Liberal makes after all the broken promises, after all the misrepresentation of what is going on?

I say to working people across the province, raise your voices, write letters to the editor of your paper, get on the open-line radio shows and speak, write to your MPPs, get on the Internet and tell people how upset you are, how unfair you find this to be. That's the only way you'll be able to hold this government to account. That's only way you'll force this government to recognize their own unfairness, their own unbalanced budget, their own attempt to stick modest- and middle-income working families with a \$3-billion bill.

1540

I note there's a federal election coming, and I just want to say few words about that. We saw all the promises Liberals made here in the province and now we see all the broken promises, and I can't help but comment on Paul Martin.

Paul Martin was the Minister of Finance when the biggest cuts to medicare were ever made in Canada. Do you know that? In the 1993 and 1994 federal budgets, the biggest cuts to health care, the biggest cuts to medicare ever in the history of Canada, came under Paul Martin. We see cities struggling. The biggest cuts to housing and to municipalities ever by a federal government happened under Paul Martin.

I remember that federal Minister of Finance. He used to advertise himself as knowing where every dollar went, being totally on top of the situation. Now we find out that under his watch \$100 million went missing in the province of Quebec under the federal sponsorship program. Do you know what he says? You must remember that show Hogan's Heroes. Whenever a prisoner escaped, Sergeant Schultz would say: "I see nothing. I hear

nothing. I know nothing." Now we see another Liberal response.

I just say to people, you look at the promises that were made over the last year by Liberals, look at all the promises that have been broken and now look at how unfair, how unbalanced this budget is to modest- and middle-income working families, and you ask yourself, can you trust any promise any Liberal makes?

The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona): Questions and comments?

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): I take pleasure in rising and taking a couple of minutes at this point in response to the leader of the third party's comments with respect to the budget.

I'll just tell you that I ran for office provincially because the people of Ontario in my riding told me clearly they wanted a change in government, that they were tired of the actions of the former government, and they were tired, quite frankly, in particular of the disregard for those most vulnerable in our communities.

This budget has addressed, to a large extent, the very people who have been coming through my constituency door on the Fridays that I can spend there in the briefings with organizations and individuals who have come to plead with us to ensure that those who are vulnerable in our community, those whom they represent, get acknowledged.

This budget has done exactly that. This budget has provided for the first increase in many years for those who rely on disability payments, a 3% increase—modest but the first time in many years. Similarly in Ontario Works, albeit a modest increase, those who are vulnerable in our community and depend upon government for their very livelihood got some acknowledgment.

For those who have the lowest incomes in our province, the necessary health premiums won't apply to those with taxable incomes under \$20,000. For those young people with mental health issues—I was visited yesterday by Kinark, an agency that supplies mental health care. An additional \$25 million in this budget is directed to children's mental health, growing over the course of the four-year plan to some \$38 million.

There are many examples, and I'll have the opportunity to present more of them during the ongoing debate, but those who are vulnerable in our community are being addressed by this budget and being addressed by the Liberal values we bring to the Legislature.

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'm pleased to participate in the debate and to comment on the remarks made by the member for Kenora-Rainy River. While he and I don't often agree on issues, I can tell you that I certainly support him in his remarks relative to this debate.

The fact remains that we are debating an issue now in the House that shouldn't even be here. The truth is that this budget is really fraudulent when it comes to the fact that we are now faced with billions of dollars of tax increases that, according to legislation in place in the province, the Taxpayer Protection Act, should have been

put to the people of Ontario for the purpose of receiving approval.

As the member for Kenora-Rainy River indicated, this budget is really going to be hurting people of low income. One aspect of this, for example, is the 50% increase—

Interjection.

Mr Klees: The member opposite laughs about the 50% increase in the cost of a driver's licence. The poorest of the poor in this province have to drive their cars. You just shrug it off and think it's very funny that people, who obviously don't live in your neighbourhood—they don't live in Mr Caplan's neighbourhood, but throughout my constituency there are people who cannot find 25 extra dollars to put on the table as a result of this attack on ordinary people in Ontario.

You should be ashamed of yourself. It's constituency week, and when you go back home you will hear from people in your constituency. You'll come back here with a different vision.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): It is indeed a privilege to stand and comment on the rather excellent speech made by the leader of the NDP.

It is difficult for many people to fathom what is contained in a budget. The Minister of Finance stood up and talked for an hour and a half, and the budget contained many provisions. There were so many facts and figures bandied about that it's positively impossible for the average person, on first blush, to understand what is in the budget, what is going to happen, what kinds of programs are going to be added to and taken away from.

But I think it all comes down to this: When you have in the clear light of day an opportunity to look, Mr Hampton has it right: The average middle- and modest-income family is going to be seeing about \$1,500 taken directly out of their pocketbooks—\$1,500 they can ill afford. A family of modest to middle income—

Interjections.

Mr Prue: Mr Speaker, I'd like to be able to hear myself. OK?

Families of modest to middle income struggle to pay things like the gas, like the shoes on their kids' feet. They struggle to pay for hydro. Now they're looking at 1,500 extra dollars as a result of this budget. I have to tell you, most of them have not counted on this expenditure. They have not counted on the expenditure because they were led to believe by this government, by this party, that the money was there, that they were not going to be taxed. Now they're finding out that not only are they going to pay that much more, but services they once relied on are going to be delisted. This is a budget that very much hurts the poor.

Mr Kuldip Kular (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): It's my honour to join my colleagues in this budget debate. This budget debate is about our government's firm commitment to improve the health care system in this province.

Our government has a goal of establishing 150 family health care teams in this province. What will these family

health care teams do? They will give a continuity of care in this province. They will reduce emergency times in hospitals in this province. There will also be after-hours coverage for patients by these family health care teams. These family health care teams will work together on an interdependent basis and will help each other. It's multi-disciplinary team care.

1550

This budget talks about having good public education in our schools. Our schools will produce reduced class sizes. The class size will be reduced to 20 students up to grade 3 in this province.

I support this budget because it is a budget which shows our government's commitment to improve the health care system and the public education system. It's a four-year plan. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: For a response, the Chair recognizes the member from Kenora-Rainy River.

Mr Hampton: I appreciate the contributions of other members. I just want to say, particularly to Liberal members, that I look forward to your continuing to make these promises across the province, because the other reality of your budget is that, if you look at it on a year-over-year basis, you are imposing a reduction in the amount of money that hospitals will have to work with. Because of the growing population, because of the aging population, because of new technologies in health care, hospitals have to manage greater and greater demands all the time. You are literally saying to hospitals that they are not going to have as much money to deal with those demands as they've had in the past.

I know from having been around here for 17 years what that means. It means those hospitals will begin cutting programs. It means they will be saying to nurses and other hospital staff, "Sorry, we don't have the budget. We have to lay you off." I know what it's like when you have to negotiate with the Ontario Medical Association. The Ontario Medical Association will want substantial increases in pay, and when you pay those increases in pay, you are not going to have the money left for these promises that you've made.

As one who said that your whole program as outlined over the last year is completely riddled with contradictions, I look forward to your continuing to make these promises around the province. I'm going to follow you around from one community to another, and as the layoffs of nurses and the cutbacks in hospital services happen, I'll be there to say again, "Why did you believe these Liberals and their promises after they've broken so many promises already?" Why would anyone believe a Liberal any more and the promises they make?

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Eglinton-Lawrence.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): The leader of the third party talks about broken promises. I think he is the godfather of broken promises. Do you remember something that he promised he would deliver when they were elected? He said he was going to bring in public

auto insurance—never did it. I also remember he said he was going to respect workers. Remember that?

Interjection.

Mr Colle: He is screaming now because he doesn't want to hear the truth. He always thinks he can scream at people.

What about the social contract?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Would the member just take his seat.

Mr Hampton: Mr Speaker, I apologize—

The Acting Speaker: Is this a point of order?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: OK, you had your time.

Mr Colle: Sorry, Mr Speaker. I shouldn't have got the leader of the third party so agitated here, because the truth does hurt.

I don't really diminish some of the points that you've made. I think the leader of the third party has made some reasonable points. I don't disagree with that. But the one thing I want to point out is that there's maybe a bit of a difference in perspective here.

In this budget, one of the things we're saying, which hasn't been done in a while, is that by investing in health care, we're not just investing in the traditional silos of health care. I think all governments, whether it be the NDP government, the Conservative government or our government, know that you've got to—I was going to say "reinvent." I don't like that word, "reinvent" government, but you've got to reinvent health care and invest in it to make it different, to make it more effective, to deliver more services. It's not just hospitals any more. I think that's what the leader of the third party doesn't understand.

In this budget, we've invested an impressive amount of money in long-term-care facilities and nursing homes—\$190 million—to improve the quality of care there, because if people aren't taken care of properly in long-term-care facilities, they end up in our hospitals. If people aren't taken care of in their homes with proper home care, they end up in our hospitals. We've made a substantive investment in home care in this budget—over \$400 million—to get home care to people in their apartments and in their homes so that they can have the home care they need and they don't have to go into hospitals.

That's why we're also investing in preventive health care right from our grade schools in the education ministry, where we're saying we need to have more money for breakfast programs and more investment in immunization. In fact, I had an interesting discussion with my daughter yesterday, who just gave birth to our first grandchild a few months ago. Actually, some of us elected MPPs have a life outside of this place. Anyway, I was discussing the budget with her, and I did mention, because the budget is quite a lengthy document, that one of the things I thought was good and innovative is that we put a substantial amount of money into free vaccinations and immunizations for children who need

them to prevent meningitis, pneumonia and chicken pox. My daughter said to me, "I'm going to save \$600." Now, \$600 is a lot of money to save, whether it's my daughter or any young mother or couple.

So that is how this budget is different. I think the third party's approach is really wallowing in the past, trying to look at things as they did 20 years ago. That's why this budget is saying that the money we need to deliver health care services has to be used also in terms of getting rid of the silos that separate hospitals from home care providers and from—for instance, I think a very effective tool of delivering health care in our communities is the community health centre. We've got about 54 of them in Ontario, and this is going to increase their budget and hopefully get them more integrated into the health care delivery system in Ontario. That's just another example, but it all adds up to making health care work for people in the decades to come, not the decades gone by. I think the third party is looking at health care in a rear-view mirror. We're trying to look ahead to see what we can do, because that's what we've been told by health economists. Whether it be Michael Decter or Michael Rachlis, they all tell us the same thing: "You can't just write cheques like the Tories did year after year, close hospitals and cut back on nurses. That doesn't work."

That's why we are saying we have to invest in nurses, we have to invest in prevention. The total package of health care goes beyond just hospitals. That's why we're delivering over \$2.4 billion into health care, not only to sustain it but to make it capable of sustaining future challenges. We can't keep doing things as we've been in the past. I should mention that this budget is about more than just health care and education. Those are our two primary goals, because those are the two most critical services in need of huge reinvestment.

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I should mention education. There's an investment of an extra \$1,100 per student. There's investment in training 1,000 extra students in teachers' college. There's an investment in literacy and numeracy, to improve the standards in those basic areas. That's where the money is going to increase student achievement.

There's another thing I'm very happy about. The budget was really praised by Mayor Miller of Toronto and Mayor McCallion of Mississauga. Ann Mulvale, of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, said that this budget fulfills that commitment of putting part of the existing gas tax—it will start at one cent in October—into funding public transit. For the first time in the history of the province, we have shown the innovative approach of taking a dedicated portion of a gas tax and putting it toward public transit. I think that has been extremely well received. Not only is it going to improve transit in Markham, in Oakville and in Mississauga, but it's also going to mean better air quality.

The municipalities, which represent the local property taxpayers, also like it, because we're respecting the fact that they have pressures they can't cope with as a result of the former downloading. That's why we'll also begin

the uploading of health care. Public health is now going to be up to 75% paid for by the province. That's why the cities and local taxpayers get relief in this budget. I think that's why it's beneficial.

One of the comments I've gotten from seniors' groups, seniors who liked this budget, is for the first time since 1992, we've increased the property tax credit for seniors who are in their own homes or who rent a home or an apartment. An extra \$85 million will go into the pockets of seniors in this province: 685,000 seniors will enjoy more money as a result of a credit for low- and modest-income seniors. They will get a bit of a break, whether they're a tenant or a homeowner. That is up to \$625 per household. That's something that you're not going to hear about from the doom-and-gloom party or the naysayers, but that's a very positive thing that helps our hard-working seniors, along with the extra home care we're going to give our seniors, and I think that's a significant part of this budget.

It's also important to note that the Ministry of the Environment is going to be up to and beyond where it has been in funding for eight years. The Ministry of the Environment is going to get the money it needs to clean our watersheds and to clean water at source, and ensure another Walkerton never occurs. So the funding is being restored to the Ministry of the Environment.

I would also say that one of the things we're doing for small and medium business, too, is the beginning of the removal of that job-killer tax, the capital tax, which is not a tax on a business's income; it's basically a tax on your property or assets, even though you could be losing money as a small or medium business—or a business of any size. So we're beginning to phase that out very moderately. I think that's good for business because, let's face it, we need more than government expenditures to pay for the health care we need, for the schools we need; we also need to create revenue to pay for our health care, our environmental protection and our schools.

This budget has also been very well received, from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce to small business people and, as I said, to mayors all across the province, and even to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. They understand that this is not punitive to their efforts to create jobs. We need the jobs in order that people have incomes, but also so that we can have the revenues to provide those essential services.

That's why I think this budget is a different kind of budget. It's innovative and it begins the improvements of services that all Ontarians expected and hopefully we can achieve as we go through this budget process.

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): It is my pleasure to rise in the Ontario legislative chamber and speak to the 2004-05 budget of the new government of Ontario.

Though it is by no means my first opportunity to speak on behalf of the people of Mississauga West in this Legislature, I have not yet given my maiden speech. As such, I request the indulgence of the Speaker and of my

fellow members on all sides to address the government's maiden budget with my maiden speech.

I represent Mississauga West, a community making the transition from suburb to big city. Mississauga celebrates its 30th anniversary as a city in this year of 2004. The city was incorporated to gather together a number of communities that had grown up as farming settlements in the 19th and 20th centuries. For example, Streetsville, a part of Mississauga, has a rich history as a farm community reaching back into the 19th century. Founded by Timothy Street, it was home to a power dam, held agricultural fairs and had an important rail link through the town. Streetsville sent a band of young men from the community off to fight for Canada in the Great War of 1914 to 1918. Those who returned founded the Great War Veterans' Association that exists today as the Streetsville legion. Some of Streetsville's turn-of-the-century homes still exist, and its original high school is now the Kinsmen Centre on Queen Street, today's main thoroughfare.

Streetsville's most famous citizen, however, was born on Quebec's Gaspé Peninsula and played semi-pro women's hockey in her youth. Mississauga Mayor Hazel McCallion represented Streetsville as ward 9 councillor before being elected mayor in 1978, an office she has held for more than 25 consecutive years. When one thinks of the world's great mayors, some of those great mayoral names are Canadian. Charlotte Whitten of Ottawa and Jean Drapeau of Montreal both guided their cities through their defining years, just as Mayor Hazel McCallion has guided Mississauga through its transition from a loose collection of post-war farming communities into Canada's sixth-largest city. Mayor McCallion now deservedly occupies a plateau of greatness with the likes of legendary mayors such as Jerusalem's Teddy Kollek, New York's Ed Koch and Berlin's Willy Brandt. I salute our mayor's limitless energy and her lifetime of service and contributions to the city and to the country she loves with such a fiery passion.

For me, my path to the Ontario Legislature began by seeing how a few good people could come together, organize for their common good and bring about a change in the community that I grew up in, in suburban Montreal, a town called Pierrefonds.

My father ran the local homeowners' association. Along with other homeowners' association heads, he helped change the city administration on three separate occasions. I watched a good mayor we helped elect—at that age my part was delivering leaflets—go down to defeat through voter apathy by a mere five votes. I learned about getting out the vote before I was 12 years old. The third and last time we changed civic administrations in Pierrefonds, I was studying physics at Concordia University. I helped draft and design the new mayor's campaign literature and ran a polling place. That mayor, Cy MacDonald, served our community with distinction for almost 20 years.

To commemorate my late father's civic contributions, there is a rue Delaney in my hometown of Pierrefonds,

Quebec. I have no doubt that in the hereafter, my father is enjoying this moment, as his name of Alvin Emmett Delaney goes into Hansard and into history in Ontario. I am sure he would be proud that the name of his son, Robert Patrick Delaney, will one day be inscribed into the marble of the Legislative Assembly building here at Queen's Park.

By my mid-20s, I had moved from the Montreal area, briefly lived and worked in Metro Toronto, and had moved to Vancouver, British Columbia. While I pursued my MBA at Simon Fraser University, I was building my social circle through the British Columbia Liberal Party. I met a young cabinet minister, Jean Chrétien, as a Trudeau cabinet minister just after he, Bill Davis and Roy Romanow had been the pivotal figures in bringing home our Canadian Constitution. And I met Pierre Elliott Trudeau on three separate occasions. Lots of people have known him longer and lots of people have known him better, but that was all I needed to solidify the Liberal values I now put to work in the government I serve and represent with pride.

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Students have sometimes asked me which party they should join. I tell them to look for the party in which they feel a kinship with the people in it, call the people in it friends, and share their homes and their lives with ease. If you can do that, you're in the right ideological home, because most of the political battles one seems to fight are with members of your own party and not the party you spend the bulk of your time organizing to oppose. If after your infighting is over, you can still claim kinship and affection for the people around you, then you're in the right political party.

I feel privileged to serve with the men and women in this government of Ontario, whose company I enjoy for its own sake. As such, I'm proud to call myself a Liberal.

Like six other members elected for the first time in 2003, I stood for election in 1999, lost, regained my nomination and won in 2003. It's not easy to lose, but in picking up the pieces and reinventing the team and the campaign all over again, I and my colleagues learned the value of commitment, of perseverance and of team-building.

Some of the fine men and women I would never have met, save through politics, deserve a mention in this address: our first Mississauga West riding association president, Joe Pathyil, and our current president, Clinton Smith; my old friend and tireless comrade Bruce Cooper, and Abdul Hafeez Khan, our campaign chair and my good friend.

It took the efforts of three successive campaign managers over 22 months to get me here: Kiril Jordanov, Marshal Fernandes and Wilf Ramey. I thank and salute them.

My personal mentor in Ontario politics is no stranger to Queen's Park. Steven Offer served as the MPP for the former riding of Mississauga North between 1985 and 1995. I salute Steve for the example he set and I thank

him for the opportunity to learn Mississauga politics, working on his behalf.

Another close friend, Peter Francis Huntley, worked with me patiently as we learned to engineer a pattern of consistently superior decisions as a campaign team. I enjoyed Peter's friendship and that of his wife inside and outside politics. In recent years, he battled diabetes and two types of cancer. He knew of the victory that our team won and that he helped build before he died this past March. I remember Peter Francis Huntley from the legislative chamber that he helped me reach.

A very special lady continues to play a big role in my life. Andrea Seepersaud, my partner in life, comes from a political family in Georgetown, Guyana. Andrea's father, Cecil Seepersaud, represented the People's Progressive Party in the Guyana Legislature for a term. Her brother-in-law, Bayney Karran, is currently Guyana's ambassador to the United States of America. The glow of Andrea's love and her unwavering support was my secret in crossing the threshold into Ontario public life. I hope Andrea and I may see and share together all that Ontario public life offers.

The growth that public life requires and the sacrifices it takes are gifts no money can buy and experience no educational institution can bestow. In my brief time here, I've seen character and wisdom from members of all three parties, and also from the dedicated men and women within the Ontario Legislative Assembly who make sense of our activities and make government in Ontario function, based on our deliberations.

Democracy in any jurisdiction is always a work in progress, an experiment redefined time and again through the years. Democracy and all that contributes to building and preserving it is truly a journey rather than a destination.

I thank the people in Mississauga West who sent me here. I'm grateful for those I have come to know while I have served here. I'm excited about the privilege and the responsibility of the service I can render as a member of provincial Parliament. I look forward to the years ahead. I am confident that a new and challenging opportunity to help build my community, my province and my country awaits with each sunrise.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Klees: I'm pleased to respond to the comments made by the two members of the Liberal Party. First, with regard to comments made by the member for Eglinton-Lawrence, I would say that he has, unfortunately, resorted to a script that has been given to him by his party, no doubt, trying to justify a budget that I know under other circumstances, if he weren't the parliamentary assistant, he would also see the devastating effect this budget is going to have on many people in the province of Ontario.

With regard to the comments from the member from Mississauga West, I want to say that I have observed one thing about the member over the short time I have gotten to know him in this House, and that is that he takes the business of government very seriously. I am sure he will

contribute significantly to the work of this Legislature in the time he has here.

I also note that he very strategically took advantage of this budget speech to in fact give his maiden speech, and that allowed him to speak on issues other than the budget itself, because I can tell you that from what I know of the character of the member from Mississauga West, he could not have truthfully stood in his place and spoken in support of the budget.

So what the members of his constituency know is that they at least have a man of integrity supporting them and working for them, because I don't believe the member from Mississauga West will ever stand in his place in this House and say that the budget bill that is presented here is good for the people of Ontario.

Ms Martel: I want to make my comments with respect to the remarks made by the member from Eglinton-Lawrence, who was talking about the NDP somehow living in the past when it came to health care. I wondered if he was having a slight case of amnesia. The biggest expansion in CHCs, community health centres, came under the NDP government. It was under our government. We were the government that also established the aboriginal community health centres. So if you want to talk about being supportive of community health centres, the biggest expansions came under us.

It was our government that regulated midwives, for example. It was our government that started the nurse practitioner program. It was our government—as I'm reading this article on diabetes—that established the northern diabetes program so that services for diabetics could be spread across all communities in northern Ontario and they wouldn't have to come to the big regional centres for diabetic care. So if you want to talk about change, we made lots of positive changes, very progressive changes, under our government. I just wanted to remind you of that.

Let's go to your daughter, who is not going to have to pay \$600 a year for immunization. You know what, Mike? If she made \$48,000 a year before she went off on maternity leave, now she's going to pay \$600 a year for the new health tax. How much further ahead are she and other working families if they are going to be paying that kind of new health care premium? Think about that. If she makes \$48,000 a year, she is going to pay \$600 a year in her new health tax.

You see, all of the changes you want to bring in are being made off the backs of low- and modest-income individuals, who are now going to have to pay a new health fee over and above the health care they pay in their taxes, over and above the cost they have to pay out of pocket now for optometrists, chiropractors and physiotherapists. If you wanted to find money for health, why didn't you reverse the 35% income tax cut? Why didn't you close the loophole in the employer health tax? Why didn't you go back to the corporate rates in 1999? You would have raised \$2.4 billion doing that. Instead, you're going to do it on the backs of low- and modest-income Ontarians.

Mr Tim Peterson (Mississauga South): It's a great pleasure to rise today and comment on our Liberal Party's first budget. Today and this week, the roles in our House have become fixed. The Liberal party is leading and the Conservative Party stands in carping opposition, backed up by the NDP in carping opposition.

As we lay out our platform, this is not just the role of leadership to actually put forward a platform that declares our values, but it is also our platform that was put together after great consultation and listening to the people of Ontario. This will also be the first of probably four or five budgets, and in the next four or five budgets we will be monitoring, changing and continuing to listen to the people of Ontario as we continue to lead and as the other parties continue to carp and try to pull us down and destroy as we build.

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There has been a major change in philosophy in this party and its ability to do things. That change has been that we will no longer cut back the size of government and cut back services, but we will charge people for the services and account for them in a very sustainable and forthright manner. Our government is putting to bed the concept that you do not have to give full accountability in the books. With our new legislation, everyone will have complete and transparent access to the books, so there will never again be a debate on whether it was a \$5.6-billion, \$6.2-billion or zero deficit going into the election.

Mr Klees: Or playing games with the numbers.

Mr Peterson: Absolutely. We will not be playing games with the numbers, as Mr Klees has so properly said, and as he did when he was in the leadership. We'll look forward to this evolution as we evolve as a leader and as the other parties continue to evolve in opposition.

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): Certainly all would realize here in the House that politics is a very serious business, and the public at large realizes that each of the parties will take credit for that which happens when they're in power or blame the other people as a result of that. But people also look at how it's handled. Do you take ownership and responsibility for the actions that you've now brought upon yourself or enhanced, or do you just pass the buck and blame everybody else? I think that all parties in some way, shape or form do the same thing.

It was yesterday morning in my constituency when Mr Jim Bedford walked into the office, and he was fuming mad. He's a retired CAW worker and he was venting on somebody and I was standing there and he was coming at me. He spoke to me, and he wanted me to mention his name in the House. He felt that communism was dead, but it was alive and well here after the budget. I said to him that I would mention what he said in the Legislature, and I am doing that today.

We explained the process and at the end of it he shook my hand and said, "Keep up the work." We'll do what we can and how we can.

There were a large number of things that were mentioned here. We mentioned the 8,000 new nurses in

the budget, yet when I meet with nurses, they tell me that there are going to be 8,000 retiring. It doesn't say 8,000 net new nurses. It says 8,000 new nurses. So are we replacing those who are retiring, or are we bringing new nurses in? Those are some of the things we have.

When I was at the local school, the principal was saying to me that in his grade 3 classes he had one class of 23 and a class of 24. How is that going to impact him? He had to bring in two portables. How was that going to play out and where was the cost going to come? What was going to take place in grade 4 when those grade 3s graduated? Was there now going to be a class of 40-odd kids?

The reality is that people look at the way things happen. The school boards will assess what they have to work with and make those decisions, and we as politicians do the best we can.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Colle: I want to thank all the members for their comments—I may not agree with them, but they were good comments—and the member for Mississauga West for his maiden speech. I thought it was heartfelt.

I just want to say that the challenge we have before us is trying to sometimes make the opposition parties understand that by increasing our revenue—which we had to do. As you know, our expenditures in three years in the province of Ontario have been increasing by 22% and our revenues are minus 0.6%, so we've got a gap. We have to find some way of funding health care, education, cities and so forth. At least with the health premium, we're able to have money put aside for these health improvements. That means that we can still have some money for education, cities and the environment. It's all connected. Whether it's my daughter or any other Ontarian, they understand that this is not just about one thing. Everything is connected.

This budget is a comprehensive four-year plan that looks at improving performances right across all ministries. As the member for Mississauga South said, it's about looking ahead; it's about leadership. The NDP always claim they want to spend more tax dollars for services, yet when we had a proposal to roll back the Tory corporate tax cut, they said no. They voted with the Tories to keep the corporate tax cut. They tell us we are not being hard enough on the corporations, yet they voted no when we tried to roll back that corporate tax. The NDP always want it both ways. Sorry; you can't have it both ways all the time.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Oak Ridges.

Mr Klees: I'm pleased to participate in this debate. Dalton McGuinty and this Liberal government are not only breaking their promise to the people of Ontario as a result of this budget in which there are multi-billions of new taxes, user fees, and various other ways of getting at the pocketbook of the people of Ontario, not only are they breaking their promise to the people of Ontario, they are also breaking the law.

I put a question to the Minister of Finance earlier today in question period, and the question I put to the Minister of Finance was: Does he recall the oath of office that he took when he came to this place, through which we, as members of the Legislature, made a commitment, swore an oath, to uphold the laws of this province? To his credit, he admitted in his response that he remembered it, and he still believes that it's his responsibility to uphold the law of this land, to uphold the laws and statutes of the province of Ontario.

You'll also know that in my follow-up question to the Minister of Finance, I then put to him how he can then justify bringing in this budget, which increases taxes to the people of Ontario, to the hard-working families of Ontario, which is in fact against the law, because we have legislation in place in this province, a statute called the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999. That legislation, that statute, that law makes it very clear that a referendum is required to be held to authorize increased taxes. Very specifically, a referendum under law is required to implement the very specific provisions of this budget bill.

The Minister of Finance, of course, sidestepped that issue. He simply shrugged it off. Isn't it interesting that in their budget bill, this government, through tabling their legislation, is going to provide a loophole for themselves so that they can in fact do precisely what the law of this province indicates is illegal.

I have grave concern that if we, as a legislative body here, are not willing to respect the law of this province, how can we expect anyone else to? Just because we have the ability, and particularly now the Liberal Party and the Premier, with a majority behind him, has the ability to walk in here and simply introduce legislation that allows him to do what is illegal? What's wrong with that picture?

Well, I believe it's wrong, and I know we'll be joined by members of my caucus who will support me in a private member's bill that I will be bringing forward to the House.

I tabled a resolution today, and that resolution reads as follows:

“Be it resolved that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario comply with section 2 of the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999 that requires a referendum to be held to authorize the following provisions in a bill that receives first reading in 2004.”

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Then the resolution makes reference to the specific budget bill that's being brought forward by this government. First, “A provision that amends the Income Tax Act to establish a new tax called the Ontario health premium...” Second, “A provision that amends section 4.1 of the Income Tax Act to provide that the tax payable by a qualifying environmental trust for a taxation year shall be calculated at the same rate as the specified basic rate of tax payable by a corporation under subsection 38(2) of the Corporations Tax Act.”

The reason I've incorporated that into the resolution is because that is a second aspect under which this

government now is seeking a loophole because it too represents a true tax increase.

Paragraph 2 of the resolution reads, “Despite section 17 of Bill 83 (An Act to implement Budget Measures, introduced on May 18, 2004), the government of Ontario is in contravention of the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999 if a bill receives first reading that includes the provisions described in paragraph 1 before a referendum is held to authorize those provisions.”

That’s a resolution that I’ve tabled. As I indicated, I will also be tabling a specific private member’s bill that will deal with this, and we will have debate in this Legislature on that issue.

I have also asked a question of the Premier in question period, whether he will allow a free vote on that bill when it comes before the House for debate. The reason for that is that I know that many members of the Liberal caucus are not feeling very comfortable about having campaigned committing not to increase taxes on the one hand and, on the other hand, to honour the law of the land, namely, the Taxpayer Protection Act.

I would hope that at least members of the Liberal caucus would want to exercise their right to support my bill and to go to the people of Ontario through a referendum to get the mandate for the tax increases they’re proposing in the budget. I’m not asking them to sidestep their support for increased taxes. After all, that is the Liberal way, and it has been forever: tax and spend. That’s nothing new, so I don’t ask them to veer from that way of doing business. What I think their constituents should be able to count on, though, is that they would deal with legislation in a way that at least respects the law of this land, the law of the province of Ontario.

What they will have to answer for is increased taxes to hard-working families in light of their promise not to increase taxes. I can share with you that I have today—these are just a few of the e-mails we have received in our office here at Queen’s Park in response to an article in the Toronto Sun this morning, in which it was made public that I would be introducing that private member’s bill and that I would also be preparing a petition that people in the province can participate in.

I’d like to read you some of those responses. This comes from people who are concerned, as you and I are, that things in the Legislature be done in accordance with the law and that people should be able to count on their Premier to keep his word.

If I might, “If I lied on my resumé and those lies were discovered, I would be immediately terminated. Why is it that McGuinty can do this so brazenly and yet still remain in office?” Interesting question.

“Dear Mr Klees:

“I’m appalled at the Ontario Liberals’ broken promises regarding the latest tax hikes. I know that the Liberals will use the health premiums to help pay for health care but then will use the other tax revenues to blow on their pet social programs. I’m also aware that you can’t throw money at health care to fix it. I support your actions. Stop this insanity.”

“Dear Frank:

“I want a referendum. These tax increases stink. Anyone can increase a tax. A real leader finds solutions. I don’t understand how a politician can publicly lie and not be held accountable. We all know during the Liberal election campaign the promises Dalton made. We voted on trust. We voted on the information communicated to the public. We voted no new taxes and a balanced budget.”

Next: “Thank you for asking Premier McGuinty to honour his election promises to not raise taxes. Please pass along some gratuitous and unsolicited advice in the matter of honesty.” I can’t read the rest of it because of some unparliamentary language contained therein.

That is an example of what people across this province are feeling about how this government is conducting its business, so we prepared a petition. The petition is now available on my Web site and will be available across the province. In fairness, I would like to suggest that members of the Liberal caucus may want to access a copy of this petition as well and have it available in your constituency office for your constituents to sign. We’re going to ask them to call your constituency office to see if in fact you have the courage to place this in front of your own constituents so they can tell you how they feel. Let’s see how openly and honestly you really are willing to consult on this important issue.

The petition reads as follows:

“Petition to Force Premier McGuinty to Obey the Taxpayer Protection Law.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the McGuinty government’s 2004 budget will break the law by not conducting a referendum on tax increases; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty signed an election pledge on September 11, 2003, promising not to raise taxes without the explicit consent of voters through a referendum, and he also promised in TV ads not to raise taxes by ‘one penny’ on ‘working families’; and

“Whereas Mr McGuinty is breaking those promises with tax increases that could cost working families as much as \$2,000 a year; and

“Whereas Mr McGuinty pledged in writing to obey the taxpayer protection law, which requires a referendum before increasing taxes;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to force the Premier to put all of his proposed tax hikes to a referendum.”

That petition, as I indicated, is available on my Web site. It is available from my office. It should be available in every MPP’s office, because the people of the province surely have the right to express their views.

I find it interesting that the Minister of Finance on a number of occasions over the last few days, when asked about this issue of a referendum, replied by saying, “Well, we’ve consulted enough, and, besides, it would cost some \$40 million to have this referendum.” I find that interesting, because in questions to the Minister of Finance in this House over the last couple weeks, I put it

to him that I had it on good authority from Elections Ontario that there in fact were consultations with the government inquiring about setting up the mechanics of a referendum. The minister denied that any such discussions had ever taken place. Clearly, the fact of the matter is that some discussions must have taken place; otherwise, how would the Minister of Finance know that it would cost \$40 million to do the referendum? So it's clear that those discussions were taking place, and I suggest this to you: The Minister of Finance had very good advice from his advisers that in order to proceed with his budget he would have to have a referendum. However, what he decided to do was to brazenly push forward, ignore that advice, and simply expect that the people of this province will forgive and forget, and simply bend over and let this government do whatever it chooses to do.

1640

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore):

That's not a very parliamentary thing to say.

Mr Klees: I'm not sure what the member opposite indicated about what I'm referring to being unparliamentary. This is very serious. She's laughing. She thinks it's quite hilarious. I'm going to suggest to the member opposite, although this is her first term in office, that these are matters not to be laughed at, that her constituents will not be laughing with her, that her constituents take this very seriously. And they, as a political party and as a government, will have to answer for their callous actions in this regard.

The people of this province expect integrity from their leaders, from their elected members. Whether we argue or debate, and we can disagree with the details of this budget, the one thing that I believe everyone in this province, regardless of partisan affiliation, will agree with is that they should be able to rely on integrity when it comes to leadership. That is not present in the Premier or any member who supports the Premier in making a commitment and then turning about and breaking that promise, and then on top of that, breaking the law of this province with regard to raising taxes. That is devoid of integrity. There is no integrity in that, and that's what this political party, this government, is going to be answering for.

I have many e-mails from people across this province. I'm not just talking about people in my riding. These are e-mails from every riding across the province. These are ordinary, hard-working families who are saying, "Enough is enough. Stop this madness." Many of these e-mails are saying, "Let alone a referendum, what can we do to call this Premier back? What can we do to call back this government that was given a mandate by the people of Ontario on, obviously, a very false commitment?"

The people of Ontario are not pleased, and they are mobilizing. Whether it is through this petition, or through phone calls or e-mails that members opposite are getting, I can tell you that this budget bill is a watershed, a very early one for this government.

The Minister of Finance, the other day when he referred to this budget bill, said that it was inspired. Well, I can tell you that it was certainly not inspired by honesty or by integrity. It was apparently inspired by simply a need to cover up for broken promises. It continues to foster the reputation that this Premier established for himself very early, that he cares not about keeping his word. He has no concern about setting an example of strong and decisive leadership. I recall that he said he wanted to be known as the education Premier. I suggest to you that he is very quickly becoming known as the Premier who could not and would not keep his word to the people of Ontario. That will not be forgiven. Whether this government agrees to go forward with a referendum or not, every week, when people across this province cash their paycheque, they will be reminded of the attack of this government on their livelihood. They will be reminded that this Premier and this government were prepared to tell them one thing, to do another, and to bring into this Parliament an illegal budget.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms Martel: I know that somewhere in his comments, the member from Oak Ridges was talking about the pledge and the taxpayers federation. I apologize because I was out for a little bit, but I'm sure he did. During the election campaign, I remember seeing that photo of Dalton McGuinty smiling into the camera, signing that pledge with the taxpayers federation that he wasn't going to increase taxes. I said to myself, "That will come back to bite him. That is going to come back to haunt him. What a crazy thing to do."

You know, here we are. You knew even before the election was called, as you looked at the Liberal plan, that the money that they wanted to invest in health care and the money they wanted to invest in education and the money they wanted to invest in kids was money that was going to have to be found by raising taxes. You could not make the kinds of investments that you outlined in your election platform without doing that. The rate of growth in the economy wasn't high enough to allow it. Even if you shut off government advertising, that was a minor portion of the amount of money you were promising for those important investments.

I watched him that day and I said, "It won't be long before Dalton McGuinty is going to be breaking that promise that he made to not raise taxes for Ontarians." You couldn't do what you promised, and you shouldn't have made the promises that you did because you couldn't have kept them.

You can't blame it on the deficit. Do you know why? Mr Phillips, a long-time, esteemed member of this assembly, said last June that there was going to be a \$5.6-billion risk, ie deficit. That didn't stop the Liberals from going out and making the promises that they did. So here we are: The ruse is up and the piper has to be paid, but the problem is that the people who are going to pay most of that are low- and modest-income Ontarians.

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It's indeed a pleasure for me to respond to my friend the member from Oak

Ridges. I've gotten to know the member from Oak Ridges reasonably well. I've served on committee with him and we did a little bit of traveling together. I certainly respect that he's entitled to provide his viewpoint on the budget document.

But it's interesting. In 1995, the Harris government embarked upon the greatest downloading on to municipalities in the history of this province. It devastated the financial capacity of municipalities to deliver the kind of services they want to deliver, and they were forced into significant property tax increases.

Let me tell you, this government, through this budget document, is starting the process of uploading. We're going to give back. We're taking over the financing of public health service. Indeed, every councillor and every mayor across this province has said that's the right thing to do.

The other issue that we're uploading is transit. In October, we'll provide one cent of the gasoline tax that will be dedicated for transit, moving to 1.5 cents a year later. The year after that, in 2006, fully two cents a litre of the gas tax will be dedicated for transit for municipalities right across this province.

Let's talk about nurses. The former Premier of this province stood up in this House and said that nurses were as useless as Hula Hoops. Where was the member for Oak Ridges? I looked in Hansard and there is not one word that he stood up and said, "Mr Premier, you're wrong; nurses are the hub of the health care system in Ontario." Where was he? Nowhere. Zilch on that issue.

What's our plan? We're going to hire 8,000 new nurses. I could keep going—

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member from Oshawa.

1650

Mr Ouellette: Earlier on I spoke about how Mr Bedford had never been in a political office, didn't know the system at all, was a retired CAW worker wondering how he was going to continue to help out his kids.

I briefly touched on the principal of a local school who is concerned with what is going to happen with his grade 4 class and what is going to happen with that class of 23, the other class of 24 and the possibilities there: Is the opportunity for split classes coming forward? How is that going to impact what takes place? For those who don't know, a split class is essentially where you have half grade 2 so you have 20 kids in grade 2, and half grade 3 so you have 20 kids in grade 3, and you fulfill the needs. The difficulty with a lot of the budgets is the population has to realize that the school boards and the other ministries will take the information and interpret and implement it in the fashion they need.

I know the member from Eglinton-Lawrence spoke about bringing down those silos within the ministry. It sounds great and wonderful, but the reality is you have to get the ministry staff, the bureaucracy and the public at large to understand these things to try and implement them, because if you don't, they won't go anywhere. It may be very interesting, but independent corporations of

hospitals and other health care facility systems may not want to get along with each other in the fashion you expect them to. Unless you have some wielding stick to tell them how to go about it and what to do, you may not get the funds spent the way you want.

As I said earlier, it is really the public at large who will look at the way something comes forward, look at the way people take ownership and responsibility for the actions. Do they roll up their sleeves and deal with it or, as a standard military tactic, villainize the enemy and make sure they can move forward on that tactic? I think the public at large realizes there have to be some changes out there, but it is how those changes come about and who is going to be the one to make those changes. Our job is to point this out, and as opposition I certainly hope the government is listening, so they can hear, and when and if changes come about they deal with them in the right way.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Klees: I want to thank the members from Nickel Belt, Peterborough and Oshawa for their comments.

To the member from Nickel Belt: In my debate I was really referring more to the breaking of the law as it relates to the Taxpayer Protection Act, because with regard to the Premier's promises, really no one cares about those any more; everyone knows he can't keep a promise. In fact, it is to the point where it doesn't matter what the government is saying now, whether it is the Minister of Finance or the Premier, all of the promises they make, no one believes a thing they say.

So I want to go beyond that and say, what about the law of Ontario? At least perhaps we can hold him accountable to that. I think what is important is that as we go forward we continue to hear from members opposite about the deficit. A careful consideration of the budget document questions the very integrity of whoever has drafted that document. Just at the flick of a switch, \$3.8 billion dollars is taken off that deficit. What is that all about? Very creative bookkeeping. As members have said here today, people in Enron were actually put in jail for doing books like that; it is called cooking them. There is such a problem in this government with honesty and integrity that I would be ashamed to go back to my constituency for this constituency week and try to face anyone there.

I can tell you, say what you will about the time we were in government, there were many times I heard these words: "I may not agree with everything you have done, but I sure respect the fact that you did what you said you were going to do." Those days are a mere memory on the part of people in Ontario, but the day will return—it may have to be three and a half or four years from now—that people will in fact look for honest government again.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member from Mississauga East.

Mr Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): The member for Oak Ridges talks a lot about integrity. The integrity of his party decimated the social services of this province,

disrespected people of all walks of life in this province, be it teachers or nurses or anyone else.

The greatest time I ever have is when I'm with the people. As I canvassed before the election, I knocked on doors and talked about our plan for the future, the plan around better health care, better schools, shorter waiting times and investing in our communities. Those times were the best times. I spoke to so many families, and what they asked for was: "Improve our services. They have killed our hospitals. They have destroyed our schools. They are not managing this province well. They are mismanaging this province."

As ideologues, that party said: "We will stand behind our platform come hell or high water. We'll slash whatever we have to slash. We don't care. We don't care about the destruction we leave behind. As neo-cons, this is our job."

What we did was put together a great platform, a responsible platform, a future-looking platform. As we costed out that platform, we actually made contingencies for \$2.2 billion dollars, plus another billion dollars, knowing full well that what was being said by that party did not factor out when we counted up all the numbers. The member from Oak Ridges talks about integrity. They always talked about a balanced budget, which we all knew was not there. There are a number of ways of running this province. The way the former government ran this province was slash and burn.

Let's look at where we are today and contrast and compare. If that party had been elected and then had to address reality, which they weren't addressing or were not being open and honest about with the people of this province and now saw a \$6-billion deficit, well, as they speculated often about government, about selling off assets, about slashing services, about fire sales, that government would have further decimated Ontario.

Dollars to doughnuts, we would have had two-tier health care. Dollars to doughnuts, they would have sold the LCBO or other assets if they were to balance the books. That was just not an option. We care too much for the people of this province. Yes, the Premier got in front of this province and he did say to the people, "I will not lower your taxes or raise them either," but the truth was that government was not being truthful with the people of Ontario, that government was hiding deficits everywhere.

Actually, I have the great opportunity to work with the Minister of Health, George Smitherman, and as we opened up the books of the hospitals, which were off the books, we found another \$1.5 billion in deficit.

Mr Leal: What was that?

Mr Fonseca: Yes, off the books, with the hospitals. We asked the different hospital CEOs, and they told us that the former Minister of Health, Tony Clement, said, "Hey, go off and just build up your own deficits out there in your hospitals, but it'll keep it off our books." That is not the way to run a government. The way to run a government is being open and honest and transparent. For those watching us today, so that this never happens again, the Provincial Auditor will be reviewing the books

six months out of an election, which will be a fixed election date. So we won't, like the previous government, play with election dates: "Should we call it now? Our polls aren't doing too well, so we won't call it now. Let's call it later. The people don't like this in our platform, so we're going to change that and do this and do that." That's not going to happen. Six months out, the people of Ontario will have a clear picture of the books, will know the election date and will be able to make the judgment call on the best person or the best party to vote for.

1700

The member for Nickel Belt also got up. That party, in their platform, was promising everything under the sun; it didn't matter what. Knowing full well they weren't going to get elected as government, they just offered it all; it didn't matter what. There would be blue skies for everybody every day, nobody would have to work, we would be building everything, all social services would be taken care of. This is all so very irresponsible. We have to be open and honest and transparent with the people of this province. That's what they wanted; that's what we gave them.

After Erik Peters looked at the books and found the deficit, we had a consultation with the province and we had town hall meetings. People from all stripes, all parties, came to these meetings. In those meetings we put out what was out there and what we were dealing with. They told us, "Don't sell the LCBO. We don't want to sell the assets." We listened. They said to us, "But yes, we have to take care of our services," and, yes, tough decisions had to be made. Those tough decisions had to be made so we could invest in our hospitals—\$2.2 billion more into our hospitals.

As the member for Eglinton-Lawrence said, it's not just about throwing more money into the pot; it's about a transformation of health care. It's about being patient-centred.

I'll give you an example, for all those listening. We're putting 96,000 more available spots for seniors who want to stay on home care. I'll give you the numbers. It costs about \$44 a day to keep someone at home on home care, it costs about \$140 a day if they are in a long-term-care facility and it costs \$800 a day if that senior stays in a hospital. What we're doing is making sure that hospitals prioritize on cardiac care, on cancer care, on hip and knee replacements, and we are putting resources toward that. But we also want hospitals to work in terms of making this health care patient-centred, getting those patients, those seniors and others, back into their homes and back into the workplace in a more efficient manner than we have seen in the past.

We are also investing heavily in prevention, something that wasn't done before. As you know, we are paying for vaccinations like meningitis, chicken pox, pneumonia. That was a paid service where a family with a newborn would have to pay about \$600 to get those vaccinations. Today, those will be paid by the government. Why that is so important is that many low-income families would not pay for that prevention because they

couldn't afford it or didn't think it was important enough. Now it's happening.

We also have invested in public health. We are now paying 75% of the public health budget; 50% was previously paid. This will help municipalities—uploading rather than all the Tory downloading that they got for so many years.

We also have made two cents of the gas tax available to public transit. In my own city of Mississauga, we had a post-budget consultation breakfast. The members from Mississauga West and Mississauga Centre were also there. In that post-budget consultation, we brought in all stakeholders, from social services to the Mississauga Board of Trade to the teachers. Small, medium- and large-size businesses were there. The mayor was there.

Mr Leal: What did they say?

Mr Fonseca: What the mayor said was, “This is a great budget in all aspects.”

Mr Leal: Which mayor? Who is the mayor?

Mr Fonseca: Mayor Hazel McCallion said, “This is a great budget. It provides the services and the long-term plan for Ontario.” She is a visionary. She can see long-term. She has been in her post for 25 years. The people of Mississauga believe in her because she is fiscally prudent but she understands that she has to provide those services.

Mr Speaker, I will be sharing my time right now with the member for Willowdale. It has been a pleasure to speak about this great plan for Ontario.

Mr David Zimmer (Willowdale): We've heard a lot on this budget debate this afternoon, and I think now, late in the afternoon, it is time to put the whole thing in a bit of historical and contextual perspective.

The Liberals went into this campaign in September on this campaign promise—this was the core of the Liberal platform—fix education, fix the health care system, fix the infrastructure system. The premise of that campaign—there were several premises, but one of the key premises of that campaign was that we had built in a \$2-billion expected deficit. That was the premise. Those were the ground rules going into the election.

Post-election, post-October 2, two realities surfaced. The first reality was that it wasn't a \$2-billion deficit, it was a \$6-billion deficit. That changed the entire equation. The second reality on October 2, or shortly thereafter, was that the health care system, the education system and the infrastructure system were in a whole lot worse shape than anybody thought—than we thought, than the Conservatives thought, than the public thought.

Faced with those two new realities, we had a responsibility. Our responsibility, as the voters told us, was to fix the education system, fix the health care system and fix the infrastructure system. Indeed, that was our promise. That's what the whole campaign was about, to renew those services: health, education and infrastructure. Faced with those new realities, those more dramatic realities, the stark choices were to let the health care, education and infrastructure systems continue to collapse, continue to rot, or fix them.

The new reality, moving from a \$2-billion deficit to a \$6-billion deficit, required a new look at funding the attempts to repair the health and education systems. We had hard choices to face. The overarching promise to do those repairs required us to make some adjustments along the way about where we were going to find the money to do it.

We made the right choice to raise money through health care premiums, to fix the health care system, to provide us with the ability to fix the education system and the infrastructure system. I say to the members of this House, that was the right choice.

Why was that the right choice? It was the right choice for three reasons: because the citizens of Ontario, the individuals of Ontario, whatever their political stripe, deserve the best health care, the best education and the best access to infrastructure.

1710

This budget is different than the budgets of the previous government because this budget is not a budget for this year and for the coming year; it is a budget, a business plan, an approach, spread over four years to fix health, education and infrastructure. It is not a quick fix spread over one year. We have a detailed plan. It's set out in the budget. It's a plan covering four years and, indeed, reaching beyond that. More than just a four-year plan, we have a time frame and we have measurable targets built into that budget spread over the four-year plan.

In short, it's not just a one-year budget; it's a four-year plan with time frames built into it and, most importantly, it's a four-year plan with targeted results built into it. At the end of the four-year period, the citizens of Ontario, whatever their political stripe, can review the plan, can look at the targets we set, can look at the measures we've set to satisfy ourselves that we've met that target, and at the end of the four-year plan, the citizens of Ontario will reflect back. They will match the measures to the targets of the four-year plan.

Some of those measures we're going to look at, not next month and not in six months but throughout the course of the plan: Have we reduced hospital waiting lists? I'm confident that the answer to that will be yes, that we will have achieved what we set out to do in the four-year budget plan.

Another target, another goal we've set to measure whether we've completed what we said we were going to do in the four-year plan is literacy rates. Four years down the road, the citizens of Ontario are going to look at the literacy rates of our elementary school and high school graduates and they're going to say, “Yes, that Liberal government committed resources to education, they set targets, they set measurable goals and they have met them.”

There are also goals, targets and measurable tests set for our approaches to repairing the infrastructure system. This is a very substantial plan. It is a long-term plan and it's a plan that has targeted and measurable results in it. It is a plan to repair this province, to repair health care, to repair education, to repair infrastructure.

Let me share with you and the members of this House some of the expectations we're going to meet over the next four years. I think when you reflect on the detail of these targets, these goals in health and education, you'll join with me in supporting this budget: short wait times for cancer patients; nine new MRI and CT scan sites; 9,000 additional cataract surgeries; 36,000 additional cardiac services; 2,300 additional joint replacements. That is a target. We're going to meet that target.

There are \$11.3 billion in operating supports for hospitals over the next year; \$600 million this year to support primary care in Ontario; community health centres, an additional \$14 million over the next year; double the number of opportunities for international medical graduates, to provide doctors for the people of Ontario; 12,000 bed lifts for hospitals and long-term-care facilities; adding chickenpox, smallpox, meningitis and pneumonia vaccinations—\$600 per child per year. That almost covers the health care premium increase.

On the education front: per student funding, \$2.1 billion, or a per student increase of \$1,100; increasing the target from 50% to 75% for students meeting provincial standards for the three Rs—reading, writing and arithmetic; another 1,000 training spaces for additional teachers; 4,000 new specialist teachers to assist with the three Rs.

These are but a few of the measurable targets, the measurable goals that are built into this budget, this four-year plan. This is a budget that deserves everyone's support.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I appreciate the comments from the two members on their budget. Obviously, they have to take a side. Obviously, as members of the Liberal Party, you have to support this catastrophe. This is a disaster. You all know it. I could see it in your eyes the other day as you looked across the room. There was a sick feeling in people's faces as they looked at Mr Sorbara breaking one promise after another. Unfortunately, this is a fact of life. It's a result of broken promises, which is your government's legacy.

You came into power on October 2, you demonized the former government for seven months, you floated around a bunch of trial balloons, you floundered in the sea, making no decisions, and you came out with a budget that was pathetic. It has hit taxpayers at an enormous rate. They're very, very disappointed. Surely you see that. You're going to hear it during constituency week, that's for sure. I haven't seen one positive thing about this budget.

I know you have to support it and you have to try to continue to demonize our government. But guys, enjoy your first term here because many of you will only have one term. I'm telling you, this is a bad budget and there are a lot of really, really unhappy people in Ontario right now listening to our comments today. They found out about your budget. They found out about the tax increases, the broken promises, and they are very, very disappointed.

This is a budget that will cause jobs to be lost to the citizens of our province. It's taking money out of the working man's pockets. I appreciate that you guys have to support it and that's your position, but it's unfortunate that this is where we're going.

Ms Martel: I had to laugh when I heard the member for Mississauga East say that the election platform of the Liberals was responsible, because nothing was further from the truth. He tried to say that the former government hid the deficit and they knew nothing about that, and there was their Liberal finance critic last June, down in the estimates committee, saying to Janet Ecker, "You have a \$5.6-billion problem." The Liberals knew that they had a \$5.6-billion problem long before the election. It didn't stop them from making 231 promises, and it didn't stop them from not putting any contingency plan whatsoever into their election platform to take that into account—nothing. There was Dalton McGuinty during the election, smiling into the camera saying, "No tax increases." Well, of course there were going to be tax increases, for goodness' sake; how else was the government going to pay for the investments they were making, especially in light of a \$5.6-billion deficit that they knew about before they went and made the promises?

You know what? In our election platform, we were honest with Ontarians, which is more than I can say for you folks, because we did tell people that we were going to raise taxes. We said that for those people who got the 35% tax decrease, we were going to cancel that. Not only that; we were going to put a surtax on those people who made \$100,000 and on income of \$150,000, so that we could raise \$1.6 billion to invest in education. We told people we were going to return to the 1999 corporate tax rates, so those companies that have been getting off scot-free under the Conservatives were going to pay their fair share again. We told people that we would close the loopholes in the employer health tax so that big corporations that were getting that exemption when they shouldn't be were going to have that shut down. We were going to raise \$700 million that way.

Those are the choices you could have made too in this budget, but you didn't make those choices. Instead, you're going to raise \$3 billion off the backs of modest- and low-income families. That's not hard to do: Kick those people in the teeth one more time. You should have taken on those who are wealthy, and wealthy corporations.

1720

Mr Shafiq Qadri (Etobicoke North): I wanted just to focus for a moment on health care, seeing as it seems to be the major thrust, the major focus of this particular budget. To do that, I'd like to open by quoting a former Prime Minister of England, Mr Benjamin Disraeli, who wrote, "The health of the people is really the foundation upon which all their happiness and all their powers as a state depend."

Just in the brief time I have, I thought I might add comments not only as the MPP from Etobicoke North but also as a physician. For example, regarding cardiac care

or cancer or joint replacement—the major thrust of this particular budget—typically what might happen? A 45-year-old individual comes to our office diagnosed with chest pain, and maybe we determine through our various procedures and diagnostic testing that they need to have a heart operation. We know, as physicians, with the state of health care previously that individual might have had to wait, for example, two, three, four or six months, even longer, for very important, critical surgery. There was a long and, unfortunately, growing list of individuals who had actually passed away, died, had major heart attacks before they actually came to that surgery. That's a real tragedy.

Similarly, for example, in cancer care, cancer is a particular disease where time is of the essence. We want to diagnose early. We want to bring the individuals to treatment early. In fact, if the cancer decides to leave home, spread around the body from its original site, then it's essentially a much more difficult problem and often a terminal illness.

It's for these types of reasons, through our consultations with the people of Ontario, that we in the government have moved very forcefully to address all these various issues, whether it's immunization, cardiac care, cancer care or joint replacement.

The Speaker: The member for Mississauga East.

Mr Fonseca: I'd like to thank the members for Simcoe North, Willowdale, Etobicoke North and Nickel Belt for their comments.

This budget plan is a plan that will take us into a prosperous future. It's a plan that invests in health care, education and infrastructure. We know that if we want quality of life, if we want Ontario to be the best place to live and work, we have to invest in these things. We have to invest in our environment. We hired more water inspectors. We are taking care of our environment. We have made inroads to work with other jurisdictions that border us to improve our environment.

We want to keep our health care system second to none. Having a great health care system, which this budget allows for, allows companies to come to Ontario, to invest in Ontario because they want a strong health care system for their employees.

Also, investing in our education system: Companies have told us that without a knowledge-based workforce, they will not be coming to Ontario; they will not grow in Ontario. We realized this, so we are investing heavily in education through all levels, through secondary schools, through elementary schools with a cap of 20 students up to grade 3. We froze tuition in this budget.

We are looking after all aspects of life here in Ontario. I am very proud of this budget, of this plan, and the people of Ontario will prosper under it.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Dunlop: Before we get into the budget debate—because we're going to hear a lot of comments over the next few days—I did want to point out that I wasn't in the House earlier this afternoon because a group of us were out at Cobourg. I just wanted to pay sort of the last

respects today to Constable Chris Garrett and the Cobourg police department and his family. The Premier was there, along with Mr Kwinter, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, our leader Ernie Eves and myself, along with Peter Kormos. I must say it was a funeral that—I've never seen anything like it before. There were literally thousands and thousands of police officers from all across North America.

You know, there are times in this House when we're very negative about each other, but the fact of the matter is, today you would be proud to be an Ontarian. It was really and truly something, how we honoured Constable Garrett and how we paid respect to him and his family. I just want to put that on the record, because I think it's so important on days like this. I know everybody would have liked to be in the House today to listen to question period, and I think even the Premier would have liked that, but I give him credit for being out in Cobourg, along with all the other folks I mentioned and literally thousands of police officers from across our province, across our country and across North America.

With that, I'll slip into the budget speech now.

I guess I look back to 1995. Your government has basically had one crutch to go back on, and that's this \$5.8-billion-and-growing deficit that you keep talking about. One thing you fail to mention with the deficit that may have accumulated until October of last year was the type of year we had. That, of course, was highlighted by SARS, by the blackout, by West Nile, by mad cow disease, costing the province literally hundreds of millions of dollars, and even up into the billions of dollars. We know that the federal government did not come through for our government. We expected \$1 billion. Eventually, I believe, Mr McGuinty signed off on about \$330 million.

Whatever deficit there was last year—obviously there is some kind of a debt, and I'm not arguing about that—it's actually very minor in comparison to what we inherited in 1995, and that was a debt of close to \$12 billion. In 1995, we'd also had a tremendous loss of jobs over a depression that hit not only Ontario and Canada, but most of North America and right around the world. So to begin with, in 1995, we went to work with a plan immediately. That was the beginning of the creation of over a million jobs in the province. It was also the beginning of some of our changes to the welfare rules and the revamping of the welfare system. About 620,000 people left the welfare rolls.

I think it's important that we compare the two governments through the two positions they began with: you and your government in 2003, and our government in 1995. We're very, very proud of the accomplishments of the Harris-Eves governments in that period: the one million new jobs, the strong, strong economy and a lot of confidence. But the thing we're most proud of is the fact that we kept our promises. That was the standard people went by. As Mr Klees and Mr Ouellette said earlier, the one thing that was so important to the citizens of the province of Ontario—they'd often say, "Look, I didn't

even vote for you. I didn't vote for Mike Harris, but you know, the guy kept his word. He started out and he said what he was going to do." That's what happens, and that's why we just cannot believe what's happened in the last seven months when we see some of the comments that are coming out of the new government.

One of the things that has really disturbed me this last couple of days is Paul Martin, the guy who's supposed to be—I think he's the Prime Minister. There hasn't been a recall or anything like that, has there? But Paul Martin wandered into this the other day, criticizing the Harris-Eves government. If there's anybody in North America who can be concerned about health care and the concerns around health care funding, it's Paul Martin. His hands are on every hospital in this country. I heard one of the members earlier talk about the deficits hospitals may have. You know what? I call any deficit that hospitals have a Paul Martin deficit. Every hospital in our country has a deficit, and it's because of the lack of funding. I can blame it all on Paul Martin because his hands are on it all.

1730

First of all, that is how he originally balanced the budget of the Canadian government: on the backs of the hospitals and on the health care system. It's as simple as that. We all know that. He cut billions of dollars out of it as the Minister of Finance. Now he wants to be the Prime Minister.

He's forgetting all about things like the sponsorship scandal and his involvement with CSL, what kind of tenders that company received from the federal government. Now he's like a brand new, clean guy out there. He's pretending nothing ever happened. Paul Martin should say nothing about any budget, because his hands are on every provincial and federal budget that you'd ever imagine in our country today.

This is the guy who will likely be calling an election, maybe even this weekend, I understand. I'm hoping he does, because I think he's going to wear some of Mr McGuinty's budget. Of course, that's why he was cutting up and had concerns with Mr Harris and Mr Eves yesterday.

I'd like to talk about Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal Party's promises. I go back—and I think this is the ad you're going to hear about. I shouldn't repeat it over and over again, but the one thing that Dalton McGuinty said on the TV ads was, "I will not raise your taxes." I'll tell you, you're going to see the media play that over and over again. You're going to hear it mentioned in this House thousands of times between now and the next election.

It will probably be an ad that will be run by, maybe, the New Democratic Party or, maybe, the Progressive Conservative Party, saying, "'I will not raise your taxes.' Remember that ad?" and then they'll refer back to all these budgets and all these disasters and broken promises you've had since then.

But do you know what? What is really something is when the guy went out on, I believe it was September 11,

and signed the Taxpayer Protection Act. It was a pledge not to continue deficits, it was a pledge to hold referendums and it was a pledge not to raise taxes. Of course, we all know what's happened. Now I understand he doesn't want to do a referendum. Why would you not want to hold a referendum? Would you be afraid that what happened in Hamilton East would happen right across the province?

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): Did you hold a referendum when you broke the law?

Mr Dunlop: We didn't break the law. Mr Speaker, he's trying to say that our government broke the law. We didn't break the law. We never broke the law. You are breaking the law with this budget. It's plain and simple. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation is saying this; all kinds of stakeholder groups throughout our province are saying this. Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal Party of Ontario are breaking the law with this budget. It's as plain and simple as that. That's why we think you should hold a referendum.

I also have to tell you that since budget day—I guess you people are hearing all kinds of positive things about the budget, what you're saying here today—we're hearing nothing positive. We've heard nothing positive, especially with the delisting of the services.

The premium is one thing. That's just a plain tax grab, but the delisting of the services has many people upset. I had a lady in the constituency office the other day. She talked about her daughter who has cerebral palsy. She has to have physiotherapy twice a week. This will no longer be covered.

Interjection.

Mr Dunlop: She's under the impression that it won't be covered. She does not have the money to pay that. I'm telling you—

Interjection: Is she on ODSP?

Mr Dunlop: No. She does not have the money to pay for physiotherapy for her little girl.

I had another mother yesterday, a mother of three. She earns \$24,000 a year. She can't afford the \$300 a year. She does not have \$25 a month extra to give Dalton McGuinty for the health care premium. She does not have it. Under \$20,000 she wouldn't pay anything, but now she's going to have to pay \$300. She is concerned. She was crying in my office. Maybe you're saying there's some magical way around this, but the people I have been hearing from over the last few days are very concerned about this.

I would like to talk a little bit about education. I understand you're going to increase education by \$2.1 billion over four years. If I'm wrong on that, please heckle and tell me, but that's my understanding. I have to tell you that in the last five years, since I've been here, education has increased by over \$2.1 billion. It has been an average of about \$800 million a year. I am concerned, because already I have seen newspaper articles from our local school boards and they're not happy. They think it's

a drop in the bucket. They're not happy with the \$500 million you folks want to put into it.

Mr Leal: Only in Simcoe North.

Mr Dunlop: Well, I can tell you, you can heckle me all you want on the other side, but people aren't happy with the \$500 million a year. As time goes on and you roll out the grant regulations, which I expect and hope we will see fairly soon, possibly right after constituency week—we need to see those figures to see just what our school boards are getting. But I can tell you the Simcoe County District School Board in my region has received substantial increases in education funding over the last five years, since I've been here anyway, and they never seem to be very happy with the funding they get. So I'm not 100% sure they will be happy this year either.

There are a couple things I wanted to kind of take credit for in your budget. There are two things. Last Friday night, I was honoured to receive an award from the Ontario Council for Technology Education. It's for a report I did in 2002 for Minister Ecker. We visited a lot of schools across the province and put together a report. One of the things it recommended was the apprenticeship tax credit, which I see you are proposing. We proposed it as well in our platform.

Interjections.

Mr Dunlop: No, we put all kinds of tax credits through. The apprenticeship tax credit was an idea I personally spent a lot of time on with Mrs Ecker and Mr Eves and they agreed to do it.

The other thing is I understand that in your budget there is \$20 million going into technological education equipment. We had made that announcement for, I believe it was, \$110 million over four years.

One of the reasons I got the award last week—there were people from the Ministry of Education at the Nottawasaga Inn and I talked to a lot of classroom teachers as well—is they received the first \$8 million dollars of the lump sum of money back in September 2003, just about the time the election was being called. They are very happy with it.

If there is anything positive in the education portion of the budget, it would have to be continuing on with my program and making sure money goes into technological education.

Mr Leal: So you're voting for it?

Mr Dunlop: I will vote for that portion of it.

The only other thing I would agree with: I believe there is \$25 million in the budget for children's treatment centres, and I believe North Bay and the county of York-Simcoe are the only two regions of the province that don't have a children's treatment centre. I can tell you right now, and I will tell Minister Smitherman and anybody here who is his PA—I believe Dr Qaadri is—that we will be lobbying quite a bit over the next couple years for a children's treatment centre for York-Simcoe. We believe it's important. So the children's treatment centres, you've put the money in there—as long as it goes to Simcoe North and of course the things I talked about with the apprenticeship.

1740

Let's talk about policing. You promised 1,000 new police officers, and there's nothing in there for the police. Not one police officer is mentioned in this document.

When I think of the issues the police are facing today, such as the grow operations; the monitoring—you guys have been flopping around on that \$700,000 announcement for monitoring of pedophiles; the gang-related crimes. More police are required. You've just got to get more money in for police. If you go back to your cabinet ministers and do anything, please lobby for more police officers, because sometimes the media will look at one police department, and if there are a few bad apples they'll demonize the whole force.

Today, when I went out to the funeral of Constable Garrett, I witnessed a fantastic group of people. You might have heard Don Cherry last night talking on the Calgary hockey game. Between periods, he made a statement on his support of the police. I think it's so important that we not forget law and order and public safety in our communities.

We're disappointed there's nothing in there for police. As corrections critic, I was hoping to take credit for 250 police officers this year in the budget, because I've been asking Mr Kwinter quite a bit since we got elected about having more police. So I'd like to see that happen.

The other thing I'd like to talk about a little bit is one of your broken promises. I'm sure Ms Martel or the NDP will get to this, but the autism promise was not a good idea. Mr McGuinty promised IBI treatment for those over the age of six. Nothing was in the budget for them. I understand the problems. I understand how huge the treatment of autism is, but you can't go out and promise people things—and I lost people to your campaigns because they thought they were getting autism treatment for one child—a good friend of mine, too. There's nothing there for them, and they're disappointed. A lot of people are disappointed with that. That's a mistake you made by making that promise.

You talked about the environment. I don't really see a lot of money in the budget for the environment. I know it's a difficult one, but I'm very concerned, because I've been harping on about the site 41 issue in my riding. It's a huge problem. I know the minister has a job to do. She has a huge staff of people in the ministry whom she takes advice from. I think we are going down the wrong road with the way landfills are right now, especially when we try to compare them to what we had in the past and bring in Justice O'Connor's recommendations from the Walkerton inquiry.

There are big problems with our landfills, and I can't see how we can continue on that path. I've been after the minister to put a moratorium on this one landfill, but maybe there are others. I'm only learning more about the one landfill in Simcoe county. There may be others across the province in the same position, and maybe her hands are tied on it. But the fact of the matter is, as we try to implement nutrient management and all the

recommendations of the Walkerton inquiry, I think we're on the wrong path.

Again we go back to taxpayer protection. I know we're getting short of time here, but I have to tell you that we thought that, when Mr McGuinty signed the Taxpayer Protection Act, he did it with the good of the citizens of Ontario in mind. It would have been easy for any one of our parties to go out and promise the world to everybody. We could have said, "Yes, we're going to give you that." But it wasn't our way. We made promises and we kept our promises. You folks made a lot of promises that you haven't kept. I'm afraid you are going to be branded with that. You're going to hear a lot about it over the next three, four or five days in question period as we move toward the spring break, maybe—no, spring break's next week—as we move toward the summer break after the spring break.

Mr Qaadri: We're working in our constituency offices.

Mr Dunlop: Yes, well, we're all working that week, but we don't have to be here; that's one thing.

I appreciate the comments today on the budget that Mr Sorbara presented. I look forward to comments and questions, and more comments in the future on it as well.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Prue: It is always a pleasure to comment upon the speeches of my friend from Simcoe North. He said a great many things, and two minutes will only allow me to comment on a couple of them.

First, he had to talk about the Balanced Budget Act and how this government is not following the Balanced Budget Act. I have to remind him his government did not follow the Balanced Budget Act either. In fact, I'm here to tell all my friends opposite that the Balanced Budget Act is bad law. You should never have voted for it in the first place and if you have an opportunity to put in a better law, please do so. We in the New Democratic Party recognize it is bad law and there is no sense chasing after it or trying to do what you are going to do.

Second, he talked about the referendum. With all respect, I don't expect you to go to a referendum, any more than I expect the Tories to ever go to a referendum. When the people of Toronto voted massively against the megacity in a referendum, they refused to recognize it.

Applause.

Mr Prue: Don't clap too loud, because when the people of Kawartha Lakes went with a ministerial question in a referendum, you won't recognize that either. There is no sense fooling the people that a referendum is some kind of answer, because no matter how they vote on the referendum, governments don't have the sort of wherewithal to actually follow what the people want. The only time they follow what the people want is in an election period when they get elected.

The reality of all this and the reason all this debate is taking place is that the Tories in their last term in office were very poor fiscal managers. In the end, they hid \$5.6 billion.

I have to say, the Liberals have had choices which I don't think you have followed well enough. You had choices, but I think you have chosen the wrong ones. The reason you chose the wrong ones is that you too are hamstrung because you made a silly promise to the taxpayers' alliance. You made that promise and you should not have. But please, do something better than the way you are taxing now.

Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): I listened with great interest to the comments of my friend from Simcoe North. I realize that he is in the opposition and his role is to criticize the government, but, quite frankly, it is starting to get a bit tiring. We have the Conservatives who stand up and tell us about how they had a plan in 1995, and he went into it in some detail. Let's talk about their plan. Their plan was going against the most vulnerable, attacking them, slashing welfare rates, attacking hospitals and educational institutions. Their plan was about downloading services to municipalities, without any money to follow. That was their plan. That is the last time we had a government in Ontario that faced a fiscal mess like the one we're facing.

What have we done? We've come in with a four-year plan which builds on education and health care and starts to restore the most vulnerable. That is a plan that the people of Ontario will see unfold over the next four years and that's a plan that they'll support.

I ask the Progressive Conservatives, where is their plan? All they do is criticize, criticize, criticize. I have to give my friend credit because he did actually stand up and admit that there were some good things in the budget, like the apprenticeship program, like technological equipment and money for children's treatment centres. I ask him, with a \$5.6-billion deficit, where are we supposed to get that money? We had to make hard decisions, but we made those decisions because we have a four-year plan.

Do you know what your answer would have been? Your answer and the one I hear from Mr Baird, the member for Nepean-Carleton, is, if the Conservatives had been in, "Don't worry. We would have had a balanced budget because we would have slashed billions and billions of dollars," from the same sorts of services that you just stood in the House and praised. It's time that this opposition started to put forward a positive plan.

Ms Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): I am going to join my colleague in terms of praising the budget because I want you to know that I received an e-mail today from Deirdre Finlay, and if I may read it to you, she says:

"Congratulations to you and your colleagues on your bold and principled leadership in Tuesday's budget initiatives. Many thanks for your assistance to children's mental health. We know that there are many compelling needs in our community and we appreciated your accessibility to allow us to help the children who need it the most. We value not only your government's short-term response to our immediate issues, but also its thoughtful approach to the longer-term challenges of

creating a sustainable, effective and integrated system that works for children and their families.”

As I said, this lady is Deirdre Finlay. She is the executive director of the Charlton Hall Child and Family Centre in Hamilton.

Very often in this House we hear criticism from many different corners, but it's so nice that once in a while we hear from someone who is appreciative of the hard work and dedication it takes to make principled leadership decisions. With a budget, where you have so many very vulnerable people who need our help, making tough decisions requires a certain amount of strength of character, which I believe was demonstrated by Mr McGuinty and Mr Sorbara in their approach to the very difficult decision-making in this budget.

They were able to take a look at some of the needs of Ontario and make the decisions as required to help those most in need of help, the most vulnerable in our community who require the support we in this House hope to achieve over time.

1750

Mr Delaney: Let me take a brief moment to address some remarks made earlier this afternoon by the member for Oak Ridges. First of all, I thank him for his kind remarks on my maiden speech. I know the member from Oak Ridges to be someone of character and commitment, and it will be a challenge and a privilege to disagree passionately with him. To respond to a challenge he laid before me, I stand in this House and say to the people of Ontario that their government's budget and plan for their future is good for the people of Ontario.

Let me address just one point in the budget. Our schools and hospital boards have said to us repeatedly, “Please don't ask us to make multi-year plans when you only give us one-year funding and when we only get that one-year funding about two thirds of the way through the budget cycle.” In this budget one of the commitments made by the Minister of Finance to school boards and hospital boards across Ontario is that you can see what we have laid out for four years. This means that when you're asked to plan multi-year, you're going to get the resources to be able to know in the future exactly what you are going to have to work with. I think that's an important step forward.

If nothing else, that was one of the reasons I received a telephone call yesterday from the president of the Credit Valley Hospital, Wayne Fyffe, who said, “Congratulations on your budget. This is one of the steps it will take to ensure universality of health care in Ontario.”

As has previously been mentioned, in Mississauga we held a budget breakfast the day after the budget. Among the people who came to say, “The budget is good for the city of Mississauga,” was our mayor, Hazel McCallion. Our social services provider said, “The budget is good for the province of Ontario,” and our business people say, “The budget is good for the province of Ontario.”

The Speaker: The member for Simcoe North has two minutes.

Mr Dunlop: I'd like to thank the members from Beaches-East York, Kitchener Centre, Hamilton West and Mississauga West for their comments. I could go on for quite a while here, but one of the problems we have is with some of the timings. We've seen some timings that you've done recently. One of the things was your Hamilton by-election. It's amazing you had it last week. You only got 26% of the vote, but I wonder what you would have got if it had been held tomorrow.

Interjection.

Mr Dunlop: I wonder, Michael, what it would have been. It would have been amazing.

Second, you held it two days before constituency week, so you're hoping it will die down. That's what's happening.

The other thing you're hoping will happen is that Mr Martin, our gangster from Ottawa, will call an election.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Something in your face tells me you said something unparliamentary.

Mr Dunlop: I withdraw that. I can think of a lot better words than that.

Let me just read something. People are reading sentences here. This is from the Ottawa Citizen—you have a lot of seats in Ottawa—“One need look no further than the McGuinty government to explain the crisis in Canadian democracy: voter cynicism and apathy. The government's ... ”—I can't use this word—“and failures have made politics into a game in which voters are treated as idiots.

“As the first step in rehabilitation, our democracy urgently needs a recall mechanism that would remove from office people who engage in the scale of deception we have just witnessed from Mr McGuinty and his associates.”

I think that letter says it all. That's what we are hearing across the province. We think this budget is bad news for the citizens of Ontario. We think it's a step back at least 15 to 20 years. We will not under any circumstances support this budget unless you agree to a referendum, and I know you—

The Speaker: Thank you. The Minister of Agriculture and Food.

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Mr Speaker, His Honour awaits.

His Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario entered the chamber of the Legislative Assembly and took his seat upon the throne.

ROYAL ASSENT
SANCTION ROYALE

Hon James K. Bartleman (Lieutenant Governor): Pray be seated.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): May it please Your Honour, the Legislative Assembly of the province has, at its present meetings thereof, passed certain bills to which, in the name of and on behalf of the said

Legislative Assembly, I respectfully request Your Honour's assent.

Deputy Clerk (Ms Deborah Deller): The following are the titles of the bills to which Your Honour's assent is prayed:

Bill 31, An Act to enact and amend various Acts with respect to the protection of health information / Projet de loi 31, Loi édictant et modifiant diverses lois en ce qui a trait à la protection des renseignements sur la santé.

Bill 68, An Act to amend the repeal date of the Edible Oil Products Act / Projet de loi 68, Loi modifiant la date

d'abrogation de la Loi sur les produits oléagineux comestibles.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): In Her Majesty's name, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor doth assent to these bills.

Au nom de Sa Majesté, Son Honneur le lieutenant-gouverneur sanctionne ces projets de loi.

His Honour was then pleased to retire.

The Speaker: It being past 6 of the clock, the House stands adjourned until Monday, May 31.

The House adjourned at 1803.

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

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Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Hamilton East /	Vacant
Ancaster-Dundas-	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Hamilton-Est	
Flamborough-Aldershot		Hamilton Mountain	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 civiles et de l'Immigration
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative		
Beaches-East York /	Prue, Michael (ND)	Hamilton West /	Marsales, Judy (L)
Beaches-York-Est		Hamilton-Ouest	
Bramalea-Gore-Malton-	Kular, Kuldip (L)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and	Dombrowsky, Hon / L'hon Leona (L) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Springdale		Addington	
Brampton Centre /	Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Huron-Bruce	Mitchell, Carol (L)
Brampton-Centre		Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND)
Brampton West-Mississauga /	Dhillon, Vic (L)	Kingston and the Islands /	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
Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga		Kingston et les îles	
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)		
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kitchener Centre /	Milloy, John (L)
Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	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 /	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-Est	Wynne, Kathleen O. (L)	London North Centre /	
		London-Centre-Nord	
Don Valley West /	Eves, Ernie (PC) Leader of the opposition / chef de l'opposition	London West /	Bentley, Hon / L'hon Christopher (L) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Don Valley-Ouest	O'Toole, John (PC)	London-Ouest	Ramal, Khalil (L)
Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey	Colle, Mike (L)	London-Fanshawe	Wong, Tony C. (L)
		Markham	Takhar, Hon / L'hon Harinder S. (L) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Durham	Peters, Hon / L'hon Steve (L) Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation	Mississauga Centre /	Fonseca, Peter (L)
Eglinton-Lawrence	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Mississauga-Centre	
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Crozier, Bruce (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Mississauga East /	Peterson, Tim (L)
		Mississauga-Est	
Erie-Lincoln	Cansfield, Donna H. (L)	Mississauga South /	Delaney, Bob (L)
Essex		Mississauga-Sud	
		Mississauga West /	Baird, John R. (PC)
Etobicoke Centre /	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Mississauga-Ouest	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Etobicoke-Centre		Nepean-Carleton	
Etobicoke North /	Broten, Laurel C. (L)	Niagara Centre /	Craitor, Kim (L)
Etobicoke-Nord		Niagara-Centre	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Niagara Falls	Smith, Monique M. (L)
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Sandals, Liz (L)	Nickel Belt	Rinaldi, Lou (L)
Guelph-Wellington	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Nipissing	Klees, Frank (PC)
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Scott, Laurie (PC)	Northumberland	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Oak Ridges	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)
Halton		Oakville	
		Oshawa	

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 North / Thunder Bay-Superior- Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Ramsay, Hon / L'hon David (L) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Hon / L'hon Gerard (L) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	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
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Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	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
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Yakabuski, John (PC)	Whitby-Ajax	Flaherty, Jim (PC)
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Willowdale	Zimmer, David (L)
Sault Ste Marie	Oraziotti, David (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 déléguée à la Condition féminine
Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Duguid, Brad (L)	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 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	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 Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	York North / York-Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
Scarborough-Agincourt	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
Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Hon / L'hon Alvin (L) Speaker / Président	York West / York-Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)		
Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
St Catharines	Bradley, Hon / L'hon James J. (L) Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs		
St Paul's	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		
Stoney Creek	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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