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Legislative Assembly
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de l'Ontario

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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 31 May 2004

Lundi 31 mai 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 31 May 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 31 mai 2004

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF MEMBER
FOR HAMILTON EAST

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I beg to inform the House that the Clerk has received from the Chief Election Officer and laid upon the table a certificate of the by-election in the electoral district of Hamilton East.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): I have a letter addressed to:

“Mr Claude L. DesRosiers

“Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

“Room 104

“Legislative Building

“Queen’s Park

“Toronto, Ontario

“M7A 1A2.”

It reads as follows:

“Dear Mr DesRosiers:

“A writ of election dated the 14th day of April, 2004, was issued by the Honourable Lieutenant Governor of the province of Ontario, and was addressed to E. Joyce Newman, returning officer for the electoral district of Hamilton East, for the election of a member to represent the said electoral district of Hamilton East in the Legislative Assembly of this province in the room of Dominic Agostino, who, since his election as representative of the said electoral district of Hamilton East, hath departed this life. This is to certify that, a poll having been granted and held in Hamilton East on the 13th day of May, 2004, Andrea Horwath has been returned as duly elected as appears by the return of the said writ of election, dated the 21st day of May, 2004, which is now lodged of record in my office.

“John L. Hollins

“Chief Election Officer

“Toronto, May 25, 2004.”

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Speaker, I have the honour to present to you and the House Andrea Horwath, member-elect for the electoral district of Hamilton East, who has taken the oath, signed the roll, and now claims the right to take her seat.

The Speaker: Let the honourable member take her seat.

REQUEST TO INTEGRITY
COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table a request by the

member for Whitby-Ajax to the Honourable Coulter A. Osborne, Integrity Commissioner, for an opinion pursuant to subsection 30(1) of the Members’ Integrity Act, 1994, on whether the Honourable Gregory Sorbara, Minister of Finance, in his responsibility for the budget and budget secrecy, has contravened the act or Ontario parliamentary convention.

CONDUCT OF HOUSE PROCEEDINGS

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I want to inform the House, that due to the change in the membership of the House following the by-election in Hamilton East, December 16, 2003, recommendation to the Speaker on how to conduct the proceedings of the House will no longer apply. Specifically, since the nine members’ statements are allocated in proportion to the number of private members of each recognized party, I want to advise that the members of the government will be entitled to five members’ statements, the official opposition will be entitled to three members’ statements and the New Democratic caucus will be entitled to one member’s statement each day.

As well, the oral questions will be conducted according to the April 28, 1986, recommendation to the Speaker, as follows.

The official opposition will be entitled to a leadoff question with two supplementary questions, and a second leadoff question with another two supplementary questions.

The third party will then be entitled to a leadoff question with two supplementary questions, and a second lead-off question with another two supplementary questions.

Questioning will then proceed with one question and one supplementary question, on the rotation of official opposition, the third party and the government, to the conclusion of oral questions.

As a recognized party, the New Democratic caucus also has certain entitlements as set out in the standing orders, and these too will be observed from this point.

MEMBERS’ STATEMENTS

HEALTH CARE

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): Last week was constituency week, and as a result I had the opportunity

to speak to a great number of people in my riding. I have to say that people were very clear about how they felt in regard to the recent provincial budget. My constituency office was inundated with walk-in traffic, protest letters and phone calls by people who couldn't believe that this government is asking them to pay more for less service in health care. Then, last Wednesday, I attended a rally in my riding about delisting OHIP services. I have to say my riding is not the type that holds rallies, but they think health care is the most important service the government controls.

That's why I'm shocked that this government would attack it the way they have, and the people in my riding are shocked too. They're shocked that the government would think they'd accept taking away needed services, and yet ask for more money. They're shocked the government made the decision that physiotherapy, chiropractic services and eye examinations were not considered essential services. And they're shocked that the government didn't think about how the delisting of essential health care services would affect the daily lives of real people like them before they grabbed the money. The people of my riding are shocked that the government that constantly spouts rhetoric on preventive, not crisis, health care would now make it harder, if not impossible, for people to access the services; that the government that promised not to raise taxes so blatantly raises taxes, and it has made them very angry.

If this is how I experienced constituency week, I wonder how it went for my colleagues across the floor.

1340

BY-ELECTION IN HAMILTON EAST

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I'm pleased to rise today to deliver my first member's statement as MPP for Hamilton East. I want to begin by thanking the voters of Hamilton East. The extensive support I received on May 13 was very humbling and overwhelming. Residents of my riding spoke loudly and clearly, and I look forward to bringing their concerns to this Legislature at every opportunity.

Who are these Hamiltonians? They are women and men from every walk of life and from every ethnocultural background and every political stripe. They are people who shared with me their concerns about the direction in which this province is headed. They are worried about their standard of living and their ability to make ends meet. I'll be speaking out on their behalf with great passion and commitment.

I want to thank the hundreds of volunteers and workers who helped on my campaign. The thousands of hours you contributed brought us to victory. The efforts of each individual are very much appreciated. I see in the gallery some of my friends from the South Asian community of Hamilton East who have taken the time to join me today. I want to thank you for your support and confidence and I look forward to our growing friendship.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank my partner, Ben, and my son, Julian. You have encouraged me and believed in me unconditionally. You are my touchstones and my equilibrium. To my family and friends, amongst whom I count several members of city council, my former colleagues, my thanks and gratitude for all your support, advice and confidence.

In closing, I believe it's fitting to pay my respects to the former MPP Dominic Agostino, who represented the constituents of Hamilton East with passion and vigour. His passing was a terrible loss for the city of Hamilton and this Legislature. Dominic was a champion of the people and a fighter for justice. I look forward to carrying on that tradition for the people of Hamilton East.

EVENTS IN GLENGARRY-PRESCOTT-RUSSELL ÉVÉNEMENTS À GLENGARRY-PRESCOTT-RUSSELL

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): The tourist season is just around the corner. Glengarry-Prescott-Russell is the eastern gateway to Ontario. Please allow me to share five major events that will take place in the beautiful riding of Glengarry-Prescott-Russell.

Premièrement, L'écho d'un peuple de Francoscénie, est un spectacle avec plus de mille personnages, qui portera sur quatre siècles d'histoire française en Amérique du Nord et en Ontario.

Francoscénie prévoit donner 28 spectacles à l'été 2004, dans un théâtre en plein air à la Ferme Centenaire Drouin, à partir du 26 juin.

Furthermore, I'm proud to share with my colleagues that three of the most important festivals in my riding have joined forces to become one single event. Le festival de la curd de St-Albert, le festival Country Western d'Alfred et le festival Country Music de Wendover seront dorénavant connus sous la bannière « Commune de destination festivals—porte d'entrée de l'est ». Ces trois festivals se tiendront dès le 8 juillet.

The Glengarry Highland Games, which were first held in 1948, have since welcomed close to a million visitors from around the world who are drawn to Maxville to witness one of the largest Highland games in the world.

This year's games will take place July 30 and 31. I encourage everyone who wishes to visit the beautiful and unique riding of Glengarry-Prescott-Russell to contact my office for more information on these wonderful events.

EVENTS IN DURHAM

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'd like to share with the House some of the events of my riding over the past week. Saturday, May 29, I was pleased to attend the sod turning of the new secondary school in Bowmanville. Staff, students, parents and, indeed, the entire community look forward to the completion of this new high school. It is the latest in approximately 20 new schools or major

renovations in my riding over the past decade. However, educators in Durham riding have concerns over the benchmark funding formula issue, and I will be bringing that to the attention of the Minister of Education.

Saturday was also the annual Kids' Fishing Day, co-hosted with my colleague Gerry Ouellette, MPP for Oshawa. This event gives youth in our riding of Durham a chance to enjoy the great outdoors and learn more about Ontario's natural resources and environment.

Finally, I'd like to mention the official opening of the new baseball diamond, along with playing fields and trails, at Cartwright Fields in Nestleton. This is the culmination of several years of hard work by Cartwright Sports and Recreation and many community volunteers. Funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation in 2001 provided \$75,000 toward the project, with assistance also provided by the township of Scugog and many local fundraisers.

I'd like to congratulate Wilma Wotten, president of Cartwright Fields, as well as the original board members: Dave Frew, Colin Kemp, Patti Alpe, Garry Beechy, Dave Dietlein, Fred Ford and Ingrid Larmer. Congratulations also to the more recent board members, including Terry Stephenson, Nancy Stinson, Diane Grieve, Scott Heard and Tye Parent.

In my riding, I also heard concerns wherever I went about the new health tax, the cost of insurance, and the cost of electricity. The constituents of Durham need to be listened to.

DRINKING AND DRIVING

Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): It gives me great pleasure to rise and pay tribute today to members of my community who are working to increase the safety of Ontario's roads through the creation of a drunk driving prevention tool called the Matrix driving simulator. The simulator illustrates the effects of alcohol behind the wheel in a safe environment. It literally allows students to see what it is like to operate a motor vehicle while impaired by having them wear special goggles which simulate the visual experience of someone who has been drinking.

The Matrix is the first interactive prevention tool of its kind in the province and it is available to local schools throughout the Waterloo region through the police's high school liaison program.

This fusion of technology was made possible through community partnerships consisting of Ray Tanguay, the president; Greg Mordu, general manager of Toyota Motor Manufacturing Canada; Staff Sergeant Scott Diefenbaker from the Waterloo Regional Police Service; Tim Funk and Randy Dyke from Elmira District Secondary School; Louis Chong, University of Waterloo; Steve Harper, Edcom Multimedia; the region of Waterloo Community Health Department; and Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

I had the pleasure of recently welcoming the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to the region for a demonstration of this simulator, and I am

sure he will agree that it is an excellent example of how a community can work together to improve road safety in our province. I'm certain that all members of this Legislature join me today in congratulating all those involved with this worthwhile project, which will undoubtedly save many young lives.

HEALTH PREMIUMS

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): "I will not raise your taxes." Guess who said that over a 28-day period last fall, actually thousands of times right on the TV screens of the 12 million people who populate our province? Guess who also signed the Taxpayer Protection Act, another great photo op? It was Dalton McGuinty, the man who was desperate to win the 2003 provincial election.

Anyone who might have read the Liberal campaign document also never read anything about a health premium. Why would anyone betray the citizens of Ontario by promising not to raise taxes and yet turn around and bring forth a budget with a health premium that is in stark contrast to anything the Liberal Party campaigned on? A complete betrayal.

The same man who, in eight years of the Harris-Eves government, never once lobbied his federal cousins for a fair share of the federal health care dollar; the same man who settled for over \$600 million less in federal disaster relief as a result of SARS; the same man who wouldn't sign a resolution that both Mike Harris and Howard Hampton signed, calling on the federal government for a fair share of health care funding; the same man who never thought of mentioning a health care premium to Prime Minister Martin; the same man—Dalton McGuinty—who lives in fear of Prime Minister Martin, has now decided that Ontario's working families should bear the brunt of this draconian tax.

Our constituency week just ended. I talked to hundreds of people last week, and not one person supported the health premium—a huge tax raise. Instead, people were questioning why Ontario does not have recall legislation. They want McGuinty tossed out. Paul Martin now considers McGuinty a serious risk and is feverishly running to distance himself. Fair health care funding—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): The member for Mississauga West.

1350

SOUTHSIDE SHUFFLE

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): On behalf of the member from Mississauga South, I rise today to ask all members in the House, and the public, to record in their diaries the dates September 9, 10, 11 and 12. These are the Thursday through Sunday dates of the Southside Shuffle. The Southside Shuffle is a four-day extravaganza of more than 120 blues and jazz bands in the town of Port Credit, in the exotic riding of Mississauga South.

The Southside Shuffle was founded five years ago by Chuck Jackson and David Voice. Chuck is a two-time

Juno nominee and the winner in the year 2000 of the Maple Blues Award as the best male blues vocalist in Canada. He has been the lead singer of the Downchild Blues Band for 30 years and plays more than 15 engagements a year, as well as organizing the Southside Shuffle.

In its fifth year, 2003, the Southside Shuffle attracted more than 50,000 visitors to the town of Port Credit. While it may be too early to compare this to Mardi Gras in New Orleans, it is also important to note that visitors come all the way from Florida and Louisiana to attend this musical extravaganza.

I say to all members who appreciate good music, come to the Southside Shuffle on Thursday, September 9, through Sunday, September 12, in the town of Port Credit, where the rivers flow into Lake Ontario.

TOBACCO CONTROL

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): I'm pleased to draw attention today to World No Tobacco Day, May 31, on a worldwide basis.

As you know, the effects of tobacco use are widespread and devastating. The World Health Organization estimates that by 2020, tobacco will become the leading cause of death, killing more than 10 million people each year around the world.

Here in Ontario, the chronic health problems directly resulting from smoking are a huge drain on both our health care system and our economy. At least 6% of Ontario's \$30-billion health care costs are directly related to smoking—approximately \$1.8 billion of our health care bill each year.

The real cost of tobacco cannot be measured merely in dollars and cents but extends to lives lost and families shattered. As an example, tobacco kills about 50 Ontarians daily. That is why the McGuinty government intends to transform this province into a Canadian leader, with an aggressive plan against tobacco.

We're going to prevent young people from taking up smoking. We'll do this by making cigarettes more expensive and harder to purchase, having increased the taxes on cigarettes now by \$5 a carton. Young people will be an essential element of our strategy. Those who smoke will be informed directly of the ill effects this universal evil perpetrates on the health of Ontarians and Canadians.

FORD MOTOR COMPANY OF CANADA

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I rise today to inform members that Ford of Canada will be celebrating its 100th anniversary on August 17, 2004. Ford of Canada, as many will know, was established in Windsor, Ontario, in 1904 at the Walkerville Wagon Co, making Ford of Canada the country's longest-established automaker. As well, this was the Ford Motor Co's first international expansion.

Since that time, Ford has grown to be one of the largest employers in our country, with 16,000 employees

and 11,000 retirees, the vast majority of whom reside in Ontario. Ford of Canada also has a dealership network with approximately 500 dealers, which employs an additional 22,000 Canadians.

Over the last decade, Ford has invested over \$9.5 billion in its Canadian operations, and in 2003 alone Ford of Canada sold 240,000 vehicles. Since its inception in 1904, Ford of Canada has produced approximately 25 million vehicles. Ford of Canada's Windsor operation produced over 1.1 million engines last year, making Windsor the engine capital for Ford Motor Co.

Please join me in celebrating the 100th anniversary of Ford of Canada, from its Oakville head office to its assembly plants in both Windsor and St Thomas.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TAXPAYER PROTECTION AFFIRMATION ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 CONFIRMANT LA PROTECTION DES CONTRIBUABLES

Mr Klees moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 85, An Act to affirm the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999 / Projet de loi 85, Loi visant à confirmer la Loi de 1999 sur la protection des contribuables.

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

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): This bill affirms the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999, as it read the day before Bill 83 was introduced. Bill 83, as you know, proposes to amend the Taxpayer Protection Act so that tax measures like the health premium can be introduced into the House without a referendum. That goes against the law of the Taxpayer Protection Act.

What this bill will do is reverse that amendment contained in Bill 83. In addition to that, it allows individuals who may have been charged by the crown prior to this bill to offset any funds that have been recovered by the crown.

So I would expect as well that members of the government be given a free vote to exercise their opinion on this bill.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Do I have the members' consent to put forward that motion? Agreed.

Hon Mr Duncan: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following changes be made to the

ballot list of private members' public business: that Mr Ouellette and Mr Tascona exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr Ouellette assumes ballot item 58 and Mr Tascona assumes ballot item 25; that Mr Brown and Mr Crozier exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr Brown assumes ballot item 64 and Mr Crozier assumes ballot item 29; that Mr Mauro and Mr Lalonde exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr Mauro assumes ballot item 74 and Mr Lalonde assumes ballot item 27; and that pursuant to standing order 96(g), notice be waived for ballot items 23 and 25.

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

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm to 9:30 pm on Monday, May 31, 2004, and Tuesday, June 1, 2004, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Mr Duncan has moved that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm to 9:30 pm on Monday, May 31, 2004, and Tuesday, June 1, 2004, for the purpose of considering government business. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it. Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1400 to 1405

The Speaker: The government House leader has moved government notice of motion number 114. All those in favour of the motion, please rise one at a time and be checked by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Flaherty, Jim	Parsons, Ernie
Baird, John R.	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Peters, Steve
Bentley, Christopher	Fonseca, Peter	Phillips, Gerry
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gerretsen, John	Pupatello, Sandra
Bountrogianni, Marie	Hardeman, Ernie	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bradley, James J.	Hoy, Pat	Racco, Mario G.
Broten, Laurel C.	Hudak, Tim	Ramal, Khalil
Brown, Michael A.	Jeffrey, Linda	Rinaldi, Lou
Brownell, Jim	Kennedy, Gerard	Ruprecht, Tony
Bryant, Michael	Klees, Frank	Sandals, Liz
Cansfield, Donna H.	Kwinter, Monte	Sergio, Mario
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	Leal, Jeff	Sorbara, Greg
Cordiano, Joseph	Levac, Dave	Takhar, Harinder S.
Craitor, Kim	Marsales, Judy	Tascona, Joseph N.
Delaney, Bob	Martiniuk, Gerry	Watson, Jim
Dhillon, Vic	Matthews, Deborah	Wilkinson, John
Di Cocco, Caroline	McMeekin, Ted	Witmer, Elizabeth
Dombrowsky, Leona	Miller, Norm	Wong, Tony C.
Duguid, Brad	Millroy, John	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duncan, Dwight	Mitchell, Carol	Yakubuski, John
Dunlop, Garfield	O'Toole, John	Zimmer, David

The Speaker: All those against, please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Murdoch, Bill
Churley, Marilyn	Marchese, Rosario	Prue, Michael
Horwath, Andrea	Martel, Shelley	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 66; the nays are 8.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

1410

TYLER BOUTILIER

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent for each party to speak for up to five minutes in memory of OPP Constable Tyler Boutilier, who was killed in the line of duty.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Do we have unanimous consent that each party speak for up to five minutes? Agreed. The Minister of Community Safety.

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I rise in the House today with the unanimous consent of all parties to offer words of respect and tribute on behalf of the province of Ontario in memory of Constable Tyler Boutilier.

Constable Boutilier died on Sunday, May 23, while responding to an emergency call. He had been a member of the Ontario Provincial Police since September 2000 and was attached to the OPP's Grenville detachment. His shift partner and best friend, Constable Rick Foley, remembered a young man who had excelled at his job and supported his friends. Constable Boutilier was just 32 years old and had been married for only eight months.

The magnitude of this tragedy was reflected in the outpouring of grief and sorrow in his hometown of Havelock, where Premier McGuinty and I, as well as other members of this Legislature, attended his funeral last Thursday. The Havelock United Church was filled to overflowing with family, friends and police officers with whom he served. About 1,500 police officers from the OPP, the RCMP and municipal services across Canada lined the street outside the church eight rows deep. But most touching of all was the sorrow expressed by the residents of Havelock, a community of just 600, who considered Constable Boutilier a hero. The main street was deserted and black ribbons were tied to trees in silent tribute.

The men and women who wear the badges of police officers know the risks they run. They know that each day they report to duty could be their last. And yet, they do this willingly. They do it because they love their jobs and are proud of the role they play in keeping our community safe. This sense of duty and pride ran strongly in Constable Boutilier. His sister, Kari Dart, who is also an OPP officer, said that he loved his position in the OPP and was extremely proud on the day she presented him with his badge—a badge he wore with distinction and courage.

One cannot imagine what the loss of this young man's life will mean to his wife, Lori; his parents, Sharon and

Lewis Boutilier; his fellow officers of the Grenville detachment and his friends, but I know they will always remember him as the fine and honourable man that he was.

Next year, Constable Boutilier's name will be added to those on the police memorial on the OPP's wall of honour. In this way, he and the ultimate sacrifice he made will be remembered forever.

Let us remember that he was a hero the day he assumed his badge. Let us remember that he died doing what he loved. And let us remember that he died making the world a little safer for all of us.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): It is an honour to stand today on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus and respond to the comments made by Minister Kwinter with respect to the untimely death of Constable Tyler Boutilier of the Grenville county detachment of the Ontario Provincial Police.

On the Victoria Day weekend, Constable Tyler Boutilier was tragically killed in a motor vehicle accident while serving our province. Constable Boutilier joined the OPP just four years ago, in September 2000. By 2003, Tyler had become a member of the emergency response team, a goal he had set for himself since the beginning of his short career in the OPP.

It was an honour to join former Minister Runciman, Minister Kwinter, the Premier and other members of all three provincial parties at the funeral of Constable Boutilier at the Havelock United Church last Thursday. Police services from across our province were on hand to pay tribute to the life of Constable Tyler Boutilier.

In the last two weeks we have been reminded twice about the sacrifices the members of our police services provide to the citizens of our great province: first, the brutal murder of Constable Chris Garrett of the Cobourg Police Service, and then the tragic automobile accident that took the life of Tyler Boutilier. Each and every day of the year, the men and women who make up the police services of Ontario put their lives on the line. Many are fortunate and spend their careers unharmed, while others like Chris and Tyler pay the supreme sacrifice. We as members of this House respect and honour all those who are committed to making our roads, highways and communities more safe and secure so that we can live, work and raise our families without fear.

On behalf of our caucus, I want to pay our condolences and deep-felt loss to Tyler's wife, Lori; his parents, Lewis and Sharon; his sister, OPP Acting Detective Sergeant Kari Dart; her husband, Craig, and their children; to all of Tyler's colleagues in the OPP family in the Grenville county detachment and all of those other officers who serve our province on a day-to-day basis.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I'm pleased to be able to speak on behalf of New Democrats as we pay tribute to this bright, committed, young police officer.

As you travelled east on Highway 7 through the heartland of Ontario—this is small-town Ontario—and you saw the sign announcing, "Havelock, population 1,300,"

with the red ribbon tied around the signpost, it struck everyone travelling to that funeral that there wasn't a single person in that town who wouldn't have been touched by the death of this young man, their native son. Similarly, there wouldn't have been a single member of that town who didn't explode with pride upon realizing that one of their own, their native son, just a few brief years ago was sworn in as an Ontario Provincial Police officer. That's small-town Ontario.

Things are very different in small-town Ontario. All of us who were honoured to be able to attend that magnificent service in that small town of Havelock in that small United Church observed townsfolk lining the streets before, during and after that funeral as they watched that procession. When we observed thousands upon thousands of not just police officers but front-line emergency response personnel from across Canada standing in formation, at attention, outside that church throughout that service paying tribute to their fallen comrade, we understood, oh so viscerally, the regard and the esteem in which Tyler Boutilier was held by his family, his community, and his friends, but also the regard that all Canadians have for those front-line emergency personnel, police officers, who put their lives on the line each and every time they report for duty, having no realistic anticipation of what they may encounter during the course of that shift.

So I say this: Tyler Boutilier and his sister, who gave a moving eulogy; his comrade Rick Foley, another Ontario Provincial Police officer from the same year as Tyler Boutilier—I say that Tyler Boutilier was recognized, yes, as a hero, but also as a son of two very caring and grieving parents, as a caring brother, as an uncle, because we heard about the close and intimate relationship he had with his sister's two children, and by his young, beautiful wife, who, just as his parents had their son stolen from them far too soon, had her loving husband stolen from her far too early in their lives.

So we join in tribute to this young man, this young police officer. We join in expressing condolences to his grieving family and to his colleagues in the OPP detachment in which he served and to police officers who knew him throughout the region. And we join in saluting all police officers who, in the course of courageously fulfilling their responsibilities and obligations, risk their lives and, all too tragically, indeed surrender their lives.

As we pay tribute, let's commit ourselves to this: Let's all commit ourselves to giving our police officers, called upon to do incredibly difficult, incredibly dangerous and increasingly complex jobs, the support they need to do those jobs. Let's commit ourselves to ensuring that they have the tools and the resources to do those jobs as safely as possible, because to do anything less is to deny the incredible contribution to policing in Ontario of Tyler Boutilier, and to do anything less is to show less than appropriate regard for the incredible role that these women and men play in safeguarding ourselves, our families, and our communities and making them healthier, stronger and better places to live.

The Speaker: May we all rise for a moment of silence in respect for the life of this great individual.

The House observed a moment's silence.

1420

VISITOR

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): It is a privilege for me to recognize in the gallery Darbara Singh Randhawa, the magistrate registrar of marriages from Jalandhar in the province of Punjab, India, who is with us today. Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT CONTRACT

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): My question is to the Minister of Finance. Working families in Ontario were shocked to learn that Dalton McGuinty hired Paul Martin's campaign manager to help him, and help you, prepare the budget and sell it to Ontarians—the budget where you broke your promise not to raise taxes and where you cut health care services to the people of Ontario. Essentially, Paul Martin's strategists helped you write the budget.

Will you table today all the information from this Liberal consulting contract and will you tell us how much Paul Martin's campaign manager was paid to help you break your promise not to raise taxes to the hard-working families and the people Ontario? Will you do that, Minister?

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I would be pleased to provide that information to my friend and to the House when the final bills are in and all the addition is done. I would simply say to him, though, that he should preface his question by acknowledging that governments in this province, Ministers of Finance, have contracted for pre-budget research for 10 or 15 years. In fact, in the budget presented by Ernie Eves, the leadership campaign manager for Mr Eves, John Laschinger, was hired at a sum of \$120,000 for his pre-budget work and we don't complain about that. What we do complain about is the fact that after the last budget, the great Magna budget, those folks spent \$1 million sending highly partisan mailings to every household in the province. They should be ashamed of that. You can be sure there will be none of that on this side of the House.

Mr Baird: The question working families have is, before you entered into a contract with Paul Martin's campaign manager to help you break your promise not to raise taxes, there must have been a dollar figure established. Taxpayers in Ontario are entitled to know that before they vote on June 28. They're entitled to know that today, Minister. You should table that information today. I'd like you to stand in your place and tell us—tell all the taxpayers of Ontario—how much you paid Paul

Martin's campaign manager to help you craft your budget.

I'd like to note that there are 58 full-time communications staff in your ministry and in the cabinet office. I'd also like to know, why couldn't the hard-working members of Ontario's public service have been put to use before you contracted Paul Martin's campaign manager to help you break your promise to working families in Ontario? Will you tell us that, Minister?

Hon Mr Sorbara: I can tell my friend from Nepean-Carleton that the communications department in the Ministry of Finance worked flat out. I have never seen people work as hard as the people in my ministry over the course of the two months before the budget was presented.

I think the important thing here is that this budget will bring about a transformation in health care; this budget will bring about Ontario having the best system of public education on the continent; this budget will begin to put the province back on a course toward financial health. That's really the message that came out of that budget, and every one of those communications people were anxious to get that message out. They've done so magnificently, and I'm very proud of them.

Mr Baird: Diane Flanagan, a spokesperson for you at the Ministry of Finance, confirmed to Alan Findlay of the Toronto Sun that the government never held a public tendering process for the contract that was given to Paul Martin's campaign manager, David Herle. She went on to say that Flanagan confirmed that the subcontracting idea came from you and your ministry itself. The people of Ontario want to know, how much did you pay Paul Martin's campaign manager to help craft this budget? Frank Graves, of a leading polling company, said, "It may well have been the most poorly received budget in contemporary political history in Canada." Will there be a value-for-money audit done on this con job that's been perpetrated on the people of Ontario? Stand in your place and tell us how much.

Hon Mr Sorbara: Once again my friend from Nepean-Carleton is trying to build a case that simply doesn't exist. He knows; he was in government for a while. He was an energy minister. Do you know that huge mess we had in energy in Ontario? He was the author of that.

I want to tell my friend that every single rule relating to contracting was abided by in our contract with Earncliffe—every single rule. I do not believe that my friend would want to stand in his place and talk about the \$1 million dollars that was spent in the last Tory budget to try and flog that piece in every household. In addition to that \$1 million, they spent almost—I have the figures here; he wants exact figures—\$246,000 on radio ads promoting the Magna budget. I want to tell you that would never happen over here.

HEALTH PREMIUMS

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I have a question to the Acting Premier: Just this past week, Paul Martin

joined the other two major political party leaders in pledging a significant increase in health care funding to the provinces. Dalton McGuinty's response: "What we have here is a promise made in the heat of a campaign, sir. The irony is off the Richter scale."

In light of these commitments from the three public leaders, will you now announce the cancellation of your new health tax, or are you planning the same test of Paul Martin that people out there are applying to Dalton McGuinty? They don't believe a single word that comes out of his mouth.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): Let me tell my friend from Erie-Lincoln that all of us on this side of the House are very encouraged by the quality of the debate in the federal election campaign, particularly on health care. Each of the three parties understands that there is a serious crisis in the funding of health care in this country and indeed in this province.

The reason we brought in the Ontario health premium is that the crisis in Ontario was immediate. The financial mess and mismanagement left by the previous administration left us no alternative. But I want to tell you that I'm encouraged by what I'm hearing. The fact is, however, and my friend from Erie-Lincoln knows this, that those health care accords between provinces and the federal government could take several years to negotiate. We are ready to start the day after that campaign is over.

Mr Hudak: Acting Premier, this is what we heard this past week. Your new Dalton McGuinty health care tax is going to impose an over \$1,000 tax hike on working-class families in Ontario—over \$1,000 for middle-class families. At the same time, you're delisting services for chiropractic, physiotherapy and optometry. You may not know that insurance rates are going up, hydro is going up and gas and fuel taxes are going up. Your new tax hike is absolutely merciless.

Dalton McGuinty's name is like political poison across the province. At least a half dozen of your own backbenchers are coming out and publicly criticizing your budget. Will you put an end to this political poison? Will you back away from your delisting? Will you back away from this merciless tax hike on middle-class families?

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Hon Mr Sorbara: My friend from Erie-Lincoln suggests that a premium on a middle-class family could be \$1,000. He knows. He was here. He could reread the budget. The highest Ontario health premium is \$900 per year. I want to tell my friend that, by contrast, in the province of Alberta, for example, even the lowest wage earners, in the area of \$55,000 per family, pay over \$1,000.

But that's not the point. The point to emphasize is that we are on the road to transform health care in this province. We are on the road to 36,000 more cardiac procedures by 2007-08. We are on the road to 8,000 more nurses in this province. We're on the road to 2,300 more joint replacements. We are on the road to creating a health care system that the people of Ontario want and are willing to pay for.

Mr Hudak: I don't know where the finance minister is coming from. Back where I come from, because taxes are so high, most of the time both spouses are working, which sends that tax rate over \$1,000. If you don't know that, you're so far out of touch, you must be coming from another planet.

If you don't care about this merciless tax hike on taxpayers in the province of Ontario, if you don't care what your own backbenchers are saying about the tax hike and the delisting, maybe you care about Paul Martin and David Herle. That seems to be where your priorities are.

I'll ask you one more time. Paul Martin is putting so much distance between himself and Dalton McGuinty, it's looking like he and Alfonso Gagliano were best buddies all over again. Dalton McGuinty's name is political anthrax on the federal campaign.

One more time, because if you can back down today, you can back down down the road: Will you take away the delisting? Will you cancel your merciless tax hike on working families in Ontario?

Hon Mr Sorbara: Talk about delisting: That member was part of a government that said, about water inspectors, "Let's fire them." Nurses, 20,000 of them: "Let 'em go. We don't need 'em." Meat inspectors: "Let 'em go."

Interjection.

Hon Mr Sorbara: I'll tell my friend over there, my noisy friend from Nepean-Carleton, that the government he was a part of left a legacy of mismanagement and misrepresentation of the finances of this province which reached a new high-water mark right across the country. They will pay for it for decades.

TAXATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My first question is for the Acting Premier. Ontarians are furious with your tax grab on working families. They're furious that a single mom, making \$30,000 a year, will see a shocking 24% increase in her provincial income tax. Meanwhile, someone with an income of \$100,000 a year sees only a 6% increase.

Is this your definition of fairness? Is this what Dalton McGuinty meant when he said to working families, "I won't raise your taxes"? He won't raise the taxes of high-income people, but he's going to whack working people by 24%. Is that what you meant?

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I am extremely proud of the fact that, for the first time in Canada, this province has instituted a health care premium that is geared to income, so that those at the lowest levels of income, those earning \$20,000 in all, don't pay a thing. If you compare that, for example, to income premiums that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. I'm having difficulty hearing the member. I would like to hear the minister. If I could get less shouting on the other side, maybe I'll be able to hear that.

Hon Mr Sorbara: What I think is more important is what the premium pays for. The premium pays our bills so that we can be strong enough to acknowledge that we need to pay for the health care system that we have. The previous administration, during eight and a half years of very vibrant economic growth in Ontario, allowed our revenue base to deteriorate, so that revenues actually declined by 6%. We've turned that around with a progressive and fair premium system.

Mr Hampton: All those working families who are struggling on \$30,000 a year, who can't pay the 20% increase in auto insurance premiums, who can't pay the 20% increase in hydro premiums, who can't pay their natural gas bills are going to be really happy to learn that the McGuinty Liberals think it's fair that that single mom gets a 24% increase in her provincial income taxes while Greg Sorbara, the Minister of Finance—what do you get, Greg, a 2% increase? Is that the Liberal definition of fairness in Ontario?

Hon Mr Sorbara: My friend from Kenora-Rainy River has one note to sing throughout his political career: Every problem can be solved by taxing the rich. Let me tell my friend from Kenora-Rainy River that the premium system we have introduced, the Ontario health premium, is the only health care premium in the country that is geared to income. That single mom he talked about who is paying that premium will now get, for her children, free vaccinations for pneumonia, meningitis and chicken pox. That single mom is going to have a community health care facility that will be there for her 24/7 in her community. That single mom, if her elderly parent is in long-term care, will get a much higher quality of long-term care.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr Hampton: The tax-the-poor Acting Premier wants people to believe that somehow the promises you make in your budget are worth more than the promises you've already broken. You remember those: the promise to freeze hydro rates, the promise to roll back toll increases on the 407, the promise to do away with the P3 hospitals—all those promises you've broken.

Here's the reality: Under the Conservatives, individuals with incomes over \$100,000 a year got a 35% tax cut, and now you come along and say to those folks, "We'll give you a 6% tax increase." Meanwhile, a single mom struggling on \$30,000 a year gets whacked with a 24% increase. Is that what Dalton McGuinty meant when he said, "I won't raise your taxes?" "Don't worry, you who have a high income, I won't raise your taxes, but I'm going to stick it to the poor." Is that what he meant?

Hon Mr Sorbara: One of the things my friend from Kenora-Rainy River does not want to do is acknowledge in this House that we have a relatively progressive tax system in Ontario. Let me give you an example. An Ontarian with one child making \$24,000 a year will pay \$1,230 in provincial income tax, including this premium. On the other end of the scale, in 2004 an Ontarian earning \$1 million a year will pay a total tax of \$447,295, including this premium. I'm proud of the tax system we

have. I'm proud of the premium we brought in, but I'm more proud of what that premium will do to transform health care in Ontario and make us a leader in community-based health care.

1440

The Speaker: New question.

Mr Hampton: To the minister and Acting Premier, the millionaire gets less than a 1% increase in his income taxes as a result of your budget and a single mom on a \$30,000-a-year income gets a 24% increase, and Liberals are proud of that? You ought to be ashamed of yourselves.

This single mom works as a teller at a bank. That's where she gets \$30,000 a year, and her income tax is going up by 24%. When she works at the Royal Bank, which had profits of \$750 million in just the last three months, do you know how much the taxes are going up for the Royal Bank as a result of your budget? Zero. Again, is that your definition of fairness? You go after the bank teller. You raise her income taxes by 24%, and you say to the Royal Bank, "You get off scot-free." Is that the Liberal definition of fairness?

Hon Mr Sorbara: My friend's line of questioning this afternoon just verges on scandalous. He knows full well that in the fall we introduced a bill, Bill 2, in this Parliament dealing with corporate income tax that increased our revenues for corporate income tax, on an annualized basis, by almost \$3 billion. It should also be noted for the record that my friend from Kenora-Rainy River voted against that bill, as did every member of his caucus. Apparently, when it comes to voting, he will not vote for increased taxes on the Royal Bank. But when it comes to question period, he's only got one idol, and that is to raise corporate income taxes. I tell my friend he cannot have it both ways.

Mr Hampton: I'm learning more about the Liberal definition of fairness every minute here.

Let's take the accounting clerk at the Bank of Montreal, who is going to shell out an extra \$450 on her income taxes. Meanwhile, the Bank of Montreal, which had a \$602-million profit in the last three months alone—what did you do for them? Did you say they have to make an additional contribution to health care? No. In fact, you're going to give them, when your budget is fully implemented, a \$1-billion tax reduction because you're doing away with the capital tax.

Is that the Liberal definition of fairness? You go after working families, you whack them again and again, and you say to banks like the Bank of Montreal, "Don't tell anybody, but we're giving you a \$1-billion tax reduction when we eliminate the capital tax." Is that the Liberal definition of fairness?

Hon Mr Sorbara: My friend's rant is worthy of Jack Layton and his campaign on homelessness and the Clarity Act.

I simply tell my friend from Kenora-Rainy River that we are the first province in Canada that has made sure a health premium is geared to income, so that those with incomes under \$20,000 pay absolutely nothing and the

highest-income earners pay as much as \$900 a year. We are proud of the premium, sir. We're much prouder of what those resources are going to do in terms of better long-term care for seniors, better home care for those who can avoid hospitals by being treated at home, better community-based care, and clinics that are open and available 24 hours a day. We are very proud of that and our Ontario health premium is going to help fund that.

Mr Hampton: I have news for you, Acting Premier. The people of Ontario don't believe your promises any more. They know you will promise anything to get a vote and you will promise anything to get a headline, and people don't believe it.

I want to ask just one further question. You could have gotten about \$700 million simply by plugging the employer health tax loophole for the largest corporations. There could have been some fairness there, but you didn't even do that. You're taking \$2 billion out of the pockets of working families, and banks and corporations aren't paying anything additional as a result of your budget. Is that what Dalton McGuinty meant when he said, "I won't raise your taxes"? Was he speaking to the banks and the corporations? Is that what he meant when he went after working families and you whacked them to the tune of \$2 billion a year? The tax freeze was only for corporations. Working families get whacked. Is that what you meant?

Hon Mr Sorbara: My friend apparently wants evidence. I should suggest to my friend that he be in this House when the estimates for this year and this budget are presented and he will see hundreds of millions of additional dollars being directed toward home care and hundreds of millions of additional dollars being directed toward better community care. I suggest that he be here when he sees in the estimates the funds that will go toward educating more nurses and the funds that will be available to allow foreign-trained doctors to be able to begin to practise medicine. I suggest that he come here and look at those estimates when he sees the increased funding that is going to help hospitals all over the province reduce waiting times. I suggest that he pay attention for a change.

HEALTH CARE

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): My question is for the Acting Premier. Your Liberal health plan, which I have right here, guaranteed all Ontarians "access to ... health care services based on need, not ability to pay."

In fact, you've used the Romanow report as a framework, and I quote from page 3 of your plan, where it says—and you're quoting Roy Romanow: "I challenged those advocating radical solutions—user fees ... delisting services, greater privatization.... There is no evidence that these solutions will deliver better or cheaper care, or improve access (except, perhaps, for those who can afford to pay out of their own pockets)."

Can you please tell working families today why you have broken your promise to guarantee access to health

care and you are now advocating these radical solutions such as greater privatization and delisting services such as optometry, physiotherapy and chiropractic? Why have you broken your promise?

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): My friend, who is a former health minister, knows full well, and might have acknowledged in the preamble to her question, that none of the three services where we are reducing support—not delisting—are covered by the Canada Health Act.

Let's take them one by one. As far as optometry is concerned, we are simply no longer going to be paying for routine eye examination for those people between the ages of 20 and 65. That is the only part of optometry that is affected by our budget.

She knows as a former health minister that there are often difficult decisions about what should be covered and what shouldn't be covered. She knows that resources are needed to bring down waiting list times. She knows the horrible reality when those who are suffering from cancer cannot get appropriate treatment, when those who are suffering from serious heart problems cannot get treatment in hospitals in a reasonable amount of time. She knows that in our budget we are going to be able to provide much better access to these critical services, and as a result we have had to delist some less critical services.

Mrs Witmer: I say to the Acting Premier, your budget has ignited an anger that is going throughout this province like a brush fire. I have never, in all my years of elected office, received so many e-mails, faxes, letters or visits. In fact, your broken promise, your new draconian health care tax, is different—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order.

Mrs Witmer: Your new health care tax and your broken promise are different than anything before.

I want to quote the Kitchener-Waterloo Record in an editorial on Saturday where they state that this most basic promise of not raising or implementing new taxes was a different broken promise than the others since "it was nothing less than his most fundamental pledge, the beating heart of his contract with the people."

Then they go on to say:

"Viewed in this light, McGuinty's lie is of historic proportions"—

The Speaker: I know that the member would like to withdraw that.

Mrs Witmer: On behalf of the Kitchener-Waterloo Record, I would withdraw that.

Interjections.

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The Speaker: I ask the member to withdraw.

Mrs Witmer: I'll withdraw that.

I say to the Acting Premier, will you now acknowledge that you have broken your contract with the more than 12 million people in the province of Ontario? Will you cancel the health care tax and restore the delisted services?

Hon Mr Sorbara: I'll tell my friend that we will begin to rebuild this province out of the chaos left to us on October 2. You fired 20,000 nurses; we're going to start hiring them back. When there was an opportunity to invest—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'm not quite sure you're prepared for the answer, because I can't hear the answer. Minister, 10 seconds to wrap up.

Hon Mr Sorbara: When you had an opportunity to invest in public education, you did the tackiest of all things: You spent \$1 billion sending \$200 cheques to every citizen in the province. You fired water inspectors. You left this province with a structural deficit of \$5 billion a year every year for the rest of our future. We're going to start to turn that around, and we're going to build a province that is based on sound financial premises and high—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is to the Acting Premier. On May 13, the people of Hamilton East delivered a message to your government. They're tired of your broken promises, and they elected me to bring that message to you. But you just haven't learned and you just haven't listened. How else to explain a budget that slams low- and modest-income households with hundreds and hundreds in new taxes? It's another broken promise. Your delisting of eye tests, physiotherapy and chiropractic services means that those same people will again have to dig deep into their pockets to pay for them. Minister, will you immediately relist those services so that OHIP covers them once again?

Hon Mr Sorbara: I want to welcome the new member from Hamilton East and tell her that I think she is going to have a great future in this Parliament until the next election, and I want to wish her well.

In answer to her question, I want to refer her back to her many years of excellent work on Hamilton city council. You've done budgets for a government. You understand the pressures that confront cities like Hamilton. You know that your council, the one you just left, was facing a financial crisis. You know that when you made your budget for this year, you delisted services. You said to the people of Hamilton, "We'd like to do that, but we can't do that anymore without raising taxes unacceptably." I want to tell my friend from Hamilton East that we do the very same thing in this Parliament that you did at Hamilton city council and that governments do right around the country.

Ms Horwath: Minister, maybe you don't know the people who live in Hamilton East the way that I do. The people in that riding have some of the lowest incomes in all Ontario. Many of them are out of work. Many of them had to retire early. Many of them have health problems that are very significant. They can't afford to pay for eye tests or physiotherapy or chiropractic services, but they sure do need the services. I've already got petitions from people coming in and telling me they need to have those

services back in OHIP. Will you bring these critical health services back into OHIP, please?

Hon Mr Sorbara: I'll tell my friend that the people of Hamilton have also said to us, "Your investment in children's mental health will make a real difference." They have said to us, "Your investment in new nurses is going to help us to open a new community health care centre." They have said to us, "What you're going to be investing in long-term care is going to make a real difference to my mom or dad in a long-term-care facility." And what they have said to us in Hamilton—and I'll tell my friend, you know this very well—is that the investments we're going to make in home care are going to transform the way in which our health care system responds positively and compassionately when one of us is sick and needs care urgently. I am very proud of those reforms.

SEXUAL ASSAULT

Ms Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): My question is to the Attorney General. Hamilton was deeply saddened this past week by the brutal attack on an innocent victim as she opened her store in Jackson Square. I understand today that the Ministry of Community and Social Services has invested in enhanced programs for victims of violence and sexual assault. I know in my own riding of Hamilton West, the sexual assault centre will be receiving much-needed funds to create a peer support network for victims of assault. Minister, can you tell me, please, the other ways this funding will assist these victims of assault across the province?

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): Yes, to the honourable member for Hamilton West: This is, I think, news of hope for victims of sexual assault and sexual violence. The announcement today is going to affect communities across the province. Eighteen communities will be receiving these funds from the victims' justice fund. They will be used for everything from counselling to peer support networks to ensuring that children are well served, that women are getting the treatment they need immediately and that victims of sexual assault and sexual violence are never revictimised.

They need to know that the government of Ontario is doing everything they can to prevent sexual assault and sexual violence from happening in the future. They also need to know that there are services in place that reflect the diversity of victims and communities in Ontario, that there is no cookie-cutter solution and that we are trying to respond to each community's needs. This is good news and, I think, positive hope for those wishing to get their lives back after the horrific crime of sexual assault and sexual violence.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Supplementary?

Ms Marsales: To Minister Papatello: You mentioned money earmarked for victims of sexual violence. This is great news for women and, more importantly, a great example of this government's commitment to addressing

violence against women as we mark the end of Sexual Assault Prevention Month. We know that right now an estimated 500,000 women in Canada are sexually assaulted in one year, but less than 10% of those women actually report this violence to police. Can you tell us what today's announcement means to women who are victims of sexual assault?

Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): Thank you so much for that question. I can tell you that today's announcement of 18 different programs is particularly for front-line work by those dealing with those who have been sexually assaulted.

I can tell you, as a finale event while we promote Sexual Assault Prevention Month, it was a fine morning. Our Attorney General committed funding in 18 different municipalities for 18 different programs that involve one-on-one counselling and a handbook to be created, in one case, for parents and their young children—very progressive and innovative projects. We were pleased to do that today at the Toronto abuse council.

Let me say, as we go forward as a government over these next four years, we intend to develop a solid, workable plan for domestic abuse in general. Today was a wonderful example of that.

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DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): My question is for the Acting Premier. Promise number 152, thanks to Lorrie Goldstein and his handy compilation of promises, says, "We will make our institutions more democratic by freeing your MPP to represent you." That was by Mr McGuinty last year. I was shocked, therefore, to read in the CanWest News Service this weekend that one Andrew Steele, the Liberal caucus director, strategic research and policy—a big title—who I don't believe is a member of this Legislature, has written a memo directing all the MPPs on the other side, and a few on this side, about certain lines they are to use with respect to the budget bill. I know, Acting Premier, that you would not have let this happen, that you would not let an unelected person direct the elected Liberal MPPs, and that you would want to be consistent with your promise of "freeing your MPP to represent you." Please assure the House that you are going to free your Liberal MPPs.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I'll tell my friend from Whitby-Ajax that the budget we presented had the input of every single member of this wonderful Liberal caucus. The fact that in our budget, for the first time in 12 years, we give social assistance recipients a raise is something that every single member of this caucus supports; the fact that for the first time in years we have put specific provisions in our budget to assist the economy and communities in northern Ontario is supported by every single member of this caucus; the fact that we made sure to do something specific for children's mental health, an area that caucus and that govern-

ment ignored for years, is supported by every single member of this caucus. We are very proud of the work we have done in that regard.

Mr Flaherty: That's OK. Promise number 152 is broken. Thank you, Acting Premier.

Now we'll move on to promise number 160: "We will give your elected representative more power.... We will make sure non-cabinet MPPs"—all you non-cabinet MPPs, pay attention—"are free to criticize and vote against government legislation"—but there's an exception—"with the exception of explicit campaign promises and confidence matters."

Here's the problem, Acting Premier: explicit campaign promises number 65, "I will not raise taxes," 69, "I will hold the line on taxes" and 70, "I will live by the balanced budget law." Remember those explicit promises? Here's the dilemma: You've got a budget bill that the non-cabinet MPPs are supposed to vote for—it's a confidence matter—but you have explicit campaign promises that the non-cabinet MPPs are supposed to vote for. Which is the correct one? Are they supposed to vote to break the explicit campaign promises, or are they supposed to vote against the budget?

Hon Mr Sorbara: I will tell you, Mr Speaker, what they should do and what they are doing. They are working as a strong, powerful, dynamic, articulate caucus to help in the job of rebuilding this province. They are working in committees of this Legislature. For the first time ever, they are working in committees of cabinet to start to rebuild Ontario.

My friend was once a finance minister. It will sit on his head and his political future that, during a time of vibrant economic growth in Ontario, he allowed this province to fall into serious financial trouble such that by the time the election was called, we had a structural deficit of almost \$5 billion in this province. That's a credit to the horrible work he did while in government.

BUDGET SECURITY

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Deputy Premier. This past week has proved an old adage—and we've actually seen it—that the Liberals in Ontario are directly tied to the hip of the Liberals in Ottawa. How else can you explain the phone call from the Premier to the Prime Minister with a heads-up for some 20 seconds or 20 minutes, whatever it was, on your regressive health tax? The convention on budgets is quite specific. It says that the budget details cannot be released to anyone outside of cabinet, and that includes Prime Ministers. That's why you had, and I participated in, a very elaborate lock-up. Quite frankly, I think you broke the rules and I think the Premier broke the rules as well. My question to you is, with whom else was this privileged and secret information released prior to budget day?

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I know the Premier has had a number of conversations over the course of many months with the Prime Minister. I am

delighted that the Prime Minister has made health care in Canada one of the major components of his campaign. I am very impressed with the analysis the Prime Minister has done in taking through some of the challenges that we face right across the country, and that he understands as a former finance minister that we are going to have to work together to find the resources to finance the health care system we need. I am delighted that in his campaign he has put specific figures on the table. It certainly will take some time after the election to sit down and negotiate a deal, but I think the table is set for better health care in Canada, and better health care because of what we've done in our budget and what the Prime Minister is proposing after this election.

Mr Prue: My question is not what the Prime Minister is going to do; it's how he got his hands on that information, which was privileged and secret to all people, including him. There's another one, a Mr David Herle, the Prime Minister's campaign chair. He was a key advisor to your budget. I heard the earlier questions where you were not willing to say how much money you're going to pay him. And we're not even going to ask if it was an untendered contract, because it was.

Here we have an example of the Premier breaking other rules. He has divulged sensitive information about new tax measures. It reminds me a little bit of that old movie *Dr Dolittle* with the animal, the push me-pull you. They're both saying the same thing but they're going in opposite directions, just like the federal and provincial Liberals. In the past, ministers have resigned for leaking budgets, and this is a leaked budget. It gave an unfair advantage to those people in the federal Liberal circle who were privy to information they should not have known. My question to you is twofold: To whom else were the details leaked, and why should Paul Martin have known about the budget before the members of this Legislature knew about it?

Hon Mr Sorbara: The fog started to set in around the *Dr Dolittle* part, but I think we got to the other side of the pond. He knows that in the creation of every budget, every jurisdiction, consultations take place in anticipation of making decisions. I think the Premier answered the question yesterday with respect to his conversation with Mr Martin. Other than that, I can tell him with absolute certainty that the security and management of budget confidentiality during this past budget were of the very highest standard and we met the requirements 100%.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. In the wonderful riding of Oakville, we have a prosperous business community. We're also home to many large businesses, including some valuable members of the Ontario auto industry. One of the largest and best employers in my riding is Ford of Canada and the Oakville assembly plant. Last week, Ford announced that it would idle its Freestar assembly plant for one week in early

June. This announcement affects many people who live in my riding of Oakville. Can you tell me what this government is doing to help auto workers in Oakville?

Hon Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): Ford is making what amounts to a business decision with respect to idling its workers. Let me tell you that our government is very proud of the fact that we are doing a lot for the auto sector, and auto workers in particular. We announced, as you know, the Ontario automotive investment strategy, which is designed to leverage \$500 million into \$5 billion worth of investments across this province. We have every reason to expect that things will go very well in the future for the auto sector. It is strong; it is the linchpin of our economy. This McGuinty government is very much committed to making the auto sector even stronger than it is.

1510

Mr Flynn: While the Ford plant is a big part of Oakville's economy, it's not the only part. Oakville has over 260 head offices and more than 45 other businesses located in the community, the majority of which are small businesses. These businesses include over 100 in the information technology sector, another 100-plus in the engineering sector and over 120 in the financial sector. Minister, can you tell me what the government is doing to help these businesses and, by extension, the economy of the town of Oakville?

Hon Mr Cordiano: The small businesses of our province are the lifeline of every community, the very heart and soul of it. I'm very proud of the fact that this government recognizes that small businesses create many of the new jobs in our province. To that end, the Minister of Finance is ensuring the health of small businesses by increasing the limit for small business income from \$320,000 to \$400,000. That's certainly going to help many small businesses.

As well, we are creating a one-stop access Web portal for small businesses, and we are going to see the advent of a new small business agency to assist small businesses directly. My parliamentary assistant, Tony Wong, has been working with the small business community.

But let me say this as well: The recent budget announcement with respect to critical investments that we're making for our health care system—I say to my colleagues opposite that we have one of the greatest competitive advantages in this province, something you forgot about when you were in office: our health care system. It gives our businesses a competitive cost advantage. It allows us to compete internationally. That's why the Minister of Finance is allowing us to invest in our health care system: to make certain that we continue to have that competitive advantage. It had fallen on hard times. We were not making crucial investments in our infrastructure. That's why—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Deputy Premier. The Prime Minister, just two hours ago,

joined 12 million Ontarians in condemning your government for breaking its promises. Just two hours ago, Canadian Press: "Martin said politicians must plan for economic surprises as they roll out their campaign promises.

"It's not enough to say how you're going to be able to pay for them under the best of circumstances," he said.

"You've got to say how you're going to pay for them under very differing circumstances.... If I come to you and ask you to vote for me because I'm going to do certain things, and I don't do them, then I have broken faith."

Deputy Premier, based on Paul Martin's definition of breaking trust, has the Premier of this province broken trust with the people of Ontario?

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I tell you that what we've done is ensure that the environment of financial circumstances, as presented before the last election, can never happen again. This Legislature, in its wisdom, will pass the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act because, rather than an election taking place around the fantasy of the Magna budget, that bill, if it becomes law, will require that the government of the day put forward the real financial circumstances of the province and that that report be certified or rendered by the Provincial Auditor. That will ensure that we have a stronger democracy and that no government ever will be able to do what happened last time around with the Magna budget and the events that followed.

Mr Klees: I don't believe the Deputy Premier even believes his own words today. The fact of the matter is that the Premier made the promise not to increase taxes even after he got the Peters report. Peters reported that there was a deficit. Even after that, on numerous occasions, he said, "I will not raise taxes."

I have travelled this province for the last week. It doesn't matter whether it was Ottawa, Cornwall, Kingston, Toronto or York region, here is what people are very, very concerned about: On the one hand, they know they've been deceived by this Premier. More important than that deception is the fact that they now see this government willing to put aside the law of the province and increasing taxes without a referendum. I want to know whether this Premier is prepared—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order.

Mr Klees: —to put in place a referendum to justify what he's doing to the people of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Could I ask the member to withdraw the unparliamentary word.

Mr Klees: Speaker, if you're asking me to withdraw the reference to deception—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Could I ask the member to withdraw the unparliamentary word.

Mr Klees: I'll withdraw.

In that case, what I would like to do is rephrase my question.

The Speaker: Sorry. I think the question has been asked.

Mr Klees: Do you think—

The Speaker: The question has been asked.

Hon Mr Sorbara: I have a very good idea of where the member was going with his question. I find it totally unacceptable. I tell my friend from Oak Ridges that the health premium that we brought to this province in the budget will be presented in a piece of legislation which will be entirely consistent with the rules and the laws of this province. For my friend to go on about "illegal," "deception" and all that stuff, I reject it entirely. It's unacceptable. It's not worthy of you. You shouldn't be doing it.

What you should be talking about, in your riding and across the province, is that finally we are getting on with rebuilding our health care system, rebuilding our education system and putting this province back on a strong financial footing. I'm very proud of that.

HEALTH CARE

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question for the Acting Premier. Minister, on May 28 your Premier received the following letter, which reads:

"Dear Premier,

"Ever since your Minister of Finance tabled his budget, I have had a great number of constituents express their dismay at the cancellation of the chiropractic subsidies."

He goes on to describe that in northern Ontario, where there is mining and forestry, many back and neck injuries occur. It's as a result of an intervention by a chiropractor that people return to work much more rapidly. The writer says, "I am therefore adding my voice to those who, for one reason or another, cannot afford to pay for such services. I also trust that your government will respect the universality of health care services in Ontario."

It's signed by Rég Bélair, who is the federal MP for Timmins-James Bay. It's probably the first time that I've ever agreed with Rég Bélair. Minister, will you stop the delisting of chiropractic services?

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I think that perhaps there is some possibility of salvation for my friend, now that she's agreeing more with Liberal members and Liberal candidates. Let's get it straight on chiropractic, OK? The maximum impact that delisting could have on an individual is \$150—not one penny more in personal payments.

But my friend, who is very familiar with the workers' compensation system, knows that there is no delisting for any chiropractic service that is required by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board; that there is no delisting of chiropractic required as a result of an insured accident; that there is no delisting of services in physiotherapy for seniors; that there is no delisting of optometry for young people and seniors. So my friend ought to put this in some perspective. There will be a minor impact, the trade-off for services that will be enhanced.

1520

Ms Martel: I should just point out that Rég Bélaire is so angry, he's not even running again. I wouldn't use that as a very good example of me supporting the Liberals in some way, shape or form.

Listen, he's not the only one who is angry. I received over 280 letters and faxes in my constituency office last week. Many are from people who are on a fixed income. They aren't covered by private insurance and cannot afford to pay the additional costs for chiropractic services. They are already paying for health care through their taxes. They are going to pay again because of your new, aggressive health tax. They should not have to pay a third time, out of their own pockets, for chiropractic services, for eye care or for physiotherapy.

I say to you again: These are important health care services. They should continue to be covered under OHIP. Will you reverse your decision to delist, privatize, these important health care services?

Hon Mr Sorbara: I will simply tell my friend that the added benefits that we will bring to children's mental health, to shorter waiting times for cardiac procedures, for shorter waiting times for joint replacements, for the other investments that we are making, even today in the north in hospitals in Sudbury and Sault Ste Marie—all of which comes out of a health care budget—the additions that we are going to be making to community care and home care: These, I tell my friend, are very tough decisions, but I'm absolutely sure that they are the right decisions. I'm very proud of the way in which we are going to transform health care, particularly in the northern part of this province.

PETITIONS

FISH HATCHERY PROGRAM

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources' provincial fish hatchery program annually stocks over 10 million fish into 1,200 water bodies within the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas provincial fish hatcheries contain unique genetic strains of indigenous fish species; and

"Whereas recreational fishing is a multi-billion-dollar industry and a huge contributor to tourism and the economy throughout the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the world-class Great Lakes salmon fishery, as well as many local fisheries throughout the province, are dependent on the Ministry of Natural Resources' fish stocking program;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the government of Ontario and the Ministry of Natural Resources to refrain from any cutbacks or cancellations to this provincially significant program."

I sign my name in full agreement.

PORTLANDS ENERGY CENTRE

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have a petition which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario Power Generation and TransCanada PipeLines propose to build the Portlands Energy Centre (PEC), a 550-megawatt power plant in the port lands near Cherry Beach in Toronto;

"Whereas PEC is promoted by proponents as an alternative to coal-fired power, an interim step toward the transition to greener energy infrastructure for Ontario;

"Whereas at the same time there is no stated guarantee that its construction will lead to the necessary closure of coal-fired power plants;

"Whereas at the same time it is unclear that the proposed project will proceed to be built as a co-generation facility that produces both hydro and steam through cleaner and efficient technology;

"Whereas at the same time there are critical questions that have to be answered about how the proposed plant will impact the local air quality, climate change, local water and wildlife of Toronto and subsequently southern Ontario, areas that already are severely affected by poor air quality and other environmental damage;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario urge the Minister of the Environment to support the community's call for a full, individual environmental assessment of the Portlands Energy Centre to be conducted to resolve these crucial questions."

I affix my signature to this petition.

TOBACCO CONTROL

Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario signed by a number of small retail business owners from the riding of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas section 3.1 of the Tobacco Control Act suspends a retailer's licence to sell tobacco products for a maximum of one year, we petition the assembly to amend section 3.1 to use fines in place of suspensions;

"Whereas, under the Tobacco Control Act, it is illegal to sell tobacco products to a person under the age of 19, it is legal for a person under 19 years to purchase tobacco products. We petition the assembly to make it a legal offence for a person under 19 years to possess tobacco.

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

"Amend section 3.1 of the Tobacco Control Act, using fines instead of suspensions for penalties.

"Amend the law to make it an offence to possess tobacco products under the age of 19 years."

I too affix my signature.

DISTRICT OF MUSKOKA

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition, with hundreds of signatures from my constituents in Parry Sound-Muskoka, to keep Muskoka as part of northern Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the district of Muskoka is currently designated as part of northern Ontario; and

“Whereas the geography and socio-economic conditions of Muskoka are very similar to the rest of northern Ontario; and

“Whereas the median family income in the district of Muskoka is \$10,000 below the provincial average and \$6,000 below the median family income for greater Sudbury; and

“Whereas removing the district of Muskoka from northern Ontario would adversely affect the hard-working people of Muskoka by restricting access to programs and incentives enjoyed by residents of other northern communities; and

“Whereas the residents of Muskoka should not be confused with those who cottage or vacation in the district; and

“Whereas the federal government of Canada recognizes the district of Muskoka as part of the north; and

“Whereas this is a mean-spirited and politically motivated decision on the part of the McGuinty government;

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

“That the McGuinty government maintain the current definition of northern Ontario for the purposes of government policy and program delivery.”

I support this petition and affix my signature to it.

OPTOMETRISTS

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the last funding agreement between the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the Ontario Association of Optometrists expired March 31, 2000; and

“Whereas the optometric fees for OHIP-insured services remain unchanged since 1989; and

“Whereas the lack of any fee increase for 15 years has created a crisis situation for optometrists; and

“Whereas fees for OHIP services do not provide for fair or reasonable compensation for the professional services of optometrists in that they no longer cover the costs of providing eye examinations; and

“Whereas it is in the best interests of patients and the government to have a new funding agreement for insured services that will ensure the most vulnerable members of society are able to receive the eye care they need;

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

“That the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care resume negotiations immediately with the” association “and appoint a mediator to help with the negotiation process in order to ensure that the optometrists can continue to provide quality eye care services to patients in Ontario.”

I agree with the petitioners, and I affix my signature to this.

AJAX-PICKERING HOSPITAL

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from a thousand of my constituents. It says:

“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.”

I affix my signature to this petition.

FISH HATCHERY PROGRAM

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources’ provincial fish hatchery program annually stocks over 10 million fish into 1,200 water bodies within the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas provincial fish hatcheries contain unique genetic strains of indigenous fish species; and

“Whereas recreational fishing is a multi-billion-dollar industry and a huge contributor to tourism and the economy throughout the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas a world-class Great Lakes salmon fishery as well as many local fisheries throughout the province are dependent on the Ministry of Natural Resources’ fish stocking program;

“Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the government of Ontario and the Ministry of Natural Resources to refrain from any cutbacks or cancellations to this provincially significant program.”

I’ve signed this.

1530

TTC RIGHT-OF-WAY

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario and the Minister of the Environment that reads as follows:

“Whereas an environmental assessment is underway on St Clair Avenue West to study potential transit improvements, including the possibility of installing a dedicated TTC right-of-way;

“Whereas the consultation process so far has been in bad faith, top-down and rushed, which has disappointed and angered the local community almost entirely, and not been up to any acceptable public standards;

“Whereas comments by the chair and the members of the Toronto Transit Commission have made it clear that there is a predetermined outcome to the environmental assessment process, regardless of the objections of the local community;...

“Whereas a dedicated right-of-way would force significantly more traffic on to our local streets;...

“Whereas traffic bottlenecks at certain intersections and underpasses are already terrible...;

“Whereas the right-of-way will have substantial negative economic effects on local businesses;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, strongly urge the Minister of the Environment to order a full environmental assessment on St Clair Avenue West, one that genuinely consults and takes into consideration the views and opinions of the local community.”

Since I agree, I’m delighted to put my signature to it.

WATER QUALITY

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I have a petition concerning the new Ontario Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002, Ontario regulation 170/03, and I have several thousand signatures here.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government is implementing regulation 170/03, and in doing so will affect town halls, churches and private property owners including small businesses, local community centres and campgrounds; and

“Whereas meeting the requirements of regulation 170/03 has meant and will mean excessive costs and financial burdens for all drinking water system owners; and

“Whereas there is no demonstrated proof that this new regulation will improve drinking water that has been and continues to be safe in rural municipalities; and

“Whereas Ontario regulation 170/03 was passed without adequate consultation with stakeholders throughout Ontario; and

“Whereas stakeholders should have been consulted concerning the necessity, efficacy, economic, environmental and health impacts on rural Ontario;

“Therefore, be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario abandon the implementation of and immediately repeal regulation 170/03, as well as amending the pertinent enabling legislation.”

I support this petition and sign my name to it.

GARDERIES D’ENFANTS

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): « À l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario :

« Attendu que les gardiennes en résidences privées sont limitées à cinq enfants à la fois, selon la Loi sur les garderies;

« Attendu que les enfants scolaires ont besoin d’un toit avant et après l’école pour 90 minutes à la fois et que ces enfants âgés entre quatre ans et 10 ans servent d’un heureux modèle pour les jeunes;

« Attendu que les programmes avant et après l’école sont complets, et que les parents ont un urgent besoin d’un endroit supervisé pour les enfants d’âge scolaire;

« Attendu que les parents auront une place assurée pour les enfants scolaires auprès des gardiennes qu’ils fréquentent depuis longtemps;

« Attendu que les gardiennes en résidence privée ne sont pas syndiquées et qu’elles ont besoin de travailler au même titre que les personnes travaillant dans les garderies syndiquées;

« Nous, les soussignés, présentons la pétition suivante à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario :

« Que le gouvernement de l’Ontario apporte la modification suivante sur la définition de la garde d’enfants en résidence privée comprise dans la Loi sur les garderies permettant un nombre plus élevé de cinq enfants de moins de 10 ans. »

J’y ajoute ma signature. La pétition provient de la région d’Embrun.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I’m pleased to present a petition on behalf of the people in Dr Peter

Seca's office in Beamsville, like Margaret Guay from Jordan Station and Ada Laws of Vineland. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Dalton McGuinty Liberals promised a health care system that gives us all the care we need when we need it; and

"Whereas chiropractors, optometrists and physiotherapists provide the necessary health care to the people of Ontario to maintain healthy and active lifestyles;

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

"The Dalton McGuinty Liberals should keep their promise to invest in health care and restore funding to cover optometry, physiotherapy and chiropractic care under OHIP."

In support, I add my signature.

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; and 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 the petition.

WATER QUALITY

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario government is implementing regulation 170/03, and in doing so will affect town halls, churches and private property owners including small businesses, local community centres and campgrounds; and

"Whereas meeting the requirements of regulation 170/03 has meant and will mean excessive costs and financial burdens for all drinking water system owners; and

"Whereas there is no demonstrated proof that this new regulation will improve drinking water that has been and continues to be safe in rural municipalities; and

"Whereas Ontario regulation 170/03 was passed without adequate consultation with stakeholders throughout Ontario; and

"Whereas stakeholders should have been consulted concerning the necessity, efficacy, economic, environmental and health impacts on rural Ontario;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario abandon the implementation of and immediately repeal regulation 170/03, as well as amending the pertinent enabling legislation."

It is signed by a great number of constituents in Ontario, and I add my signature to this petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET MEASURES ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004

SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES

Mr Sorbara moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 83, An Act to implement Budget measures / Projet de loi 83, Loi mettant en oeuvre certaines mesures budgétaires.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Mr Sorbara has moved second reading of Bill 83. Is it the pleasure of the House—Mr Sorbara.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I thought for a moment we were going to just have second and third reading without further debate.

The Speaker: It will be a pleasure to hear you.

Hon Mr Sorbara: It is an honour, a privilege, and I am delighted to be beginning the debate on this very important bill, which is really one of the foundation stones of the budget that we presented in this House just over a week ago, on May 18.

I should let you know that I'm going to be making some introductory remarks about the budget and then I will be sharing my time with my colleagues from London-Fanshawe, Kitchener Centre and my parliamentary assistant, the wonderful member from Eglinton-Lawrence, who has been so incredibly helpful over the course of these many months that we've been working on this budget.

Every budget in every Parliament brings about a debate that will span the province and sometimes the country. Although there is a lot of politics—and we're in the midst of a federal election campaign, so that expands the politics—there really are five important things about this budget that I think the people of Ontario need to know about.

The first one is that we are taking enormous steps to make sure that we have a health care system that the people of this province can rely on. We're investing more money in health care, but that's not the important thing. The most important thing is the changes that those additional revenues will bring about.

In health care, we are investing in the movement from hospital care and care in doctors' offices to a more community-based care. Significant new funds are going to go to community health care centres, and we will open some 150 new facilities that will have family health care teams practising and providing care 24/7—around-the-clock health care.

1540

We're going to be investing in a higher quality of home care. I remember, from the day I was re-elected to this Parliament in the by-election of June 2001, how I heard about the shortcomings in home care in every single community. It was a chorus in unison: "We're not funding home care, and that's putting additional pressure on our hospitals. Those who could be treated in homes are staying in hospital beds, and that's having a negative effect on our emergency wards." So we're going to invest in home care.

We're going to invest as well in long-term care, because our seniors deserve a quality of care that respects what they have given to their province and their country over the course of their lives. I remember the debates in this House about how long-term care had deteriorated in Ontario over the past number of years. The debate centred around one bath per week, and when you think about that, it's just irresistible to say in a budget of a Liberal government that we're going to get on with reforms in the quality of long-term care.

So the first important thing you need to know about this budget is what it will do to improve the quality of health care in Ontario from, as I said, the movement toward care in the community to a much better level of care for our elderly.

But the thing that lifted my spirits was the ability in this budget to say something about children's mental health and to be able to allocate some \$25 million to improve children's mental health. I hear my wonderful friend the Minister of Children's Services banging her desk in delight, and I have to tell her publicly in this chamber that her passionate plea to get on with some additional resources in this area was one of the things that took the bucket.

When you hear about the real problems in our community, particularly—mental health is something we don't like to talk about. We do not like to admit that these problems exist. When it's with our kids, the notion that we, as a government and as a political party, can do something about that—the heart just leaps for joy. It's not a lot of money and it's not everything we need to do, but it's a really important start. So we're transforming health care. That's number one.

Number two, we are making historic investments in education. Those who follow Ontario politics know that for the past 10 years our schools have been a war zone. A huge disservice to our children, the battle between a Conservative government and teachers, and between Conservative governments and administrators, was an embarrassment to all of us. That's coming to an end, and we're making the investments in education that our chil-

dren need and deserve. We are not going to stop until we have North America's leading public education system, because that is the very best way to invest in the future. So the second thing you need to know about is what we're doing in education.

The third thing you need to know about is how we're going to transform support for our communities, large and small, north and south, east and west. What we were left with in funding of municipalities—it will drive you to distraction if you get into the details, but all you have to do is talk to any mayor or any councillor about how it has not been working.

In the city of Toronto, we're making historic investments in public transit. In the smallest northern community we are going to put forward resources that will help those communities provide good-quality local services. So the third thing you need to remember is that we are changing the way we fund our communities so they can thrive and provide a high quality of life in terms of municipal services to their residents.

The fourth thing you need to know is that, for the first time in almost nine years, a budget in Ontario speaks to Ontario's most vulnerable, that we are finally doing something for those who, because of circumstances, have only the Ontario disability support program for all of life's necessities. What we allot to them on a monthly basis hasn't gone up in 12 years, and that's an embarrassment in a province that is one of the richest jurisdictions in all of the continent. What we're doing for Ontario's most vulnerable sends out a powerful signal about our values as a Liberal government.

For our senior citizens, we are adding to financial support an increase of 25% to the Ontario property tax credit for seniors, because we are very concerned that seniors in their homes do not have the ability to go and get a second job or find additional resources, more income. They can't do it. I heard so many seniors during the election campaign say to me in their own wonderful way, "Having trouble staying, paying the bills, taxes, gasoline, all that sort of stuff." We're making a significant new investment to help our seniors continue to have vibrant lives in their own homes, and I'm very proud of that. That's the fourth thing you need to know about this budget.

The fifth and, in a sense, the most important thing that you need to know is that this budget will bring Ontario back to sound financial health. I don't need to go on about what those guys over there left us. It was a financial calamity of historic proportions, particularly because we created in the Ontario government this structural deficit during really good economic times. I contrast this with what the Bob Rae government had to cope with when, shortly after they came to government, the province, the country, the continent went into very serious financial times, and they did run large deficits and they did create huge financial challenges for their successors. But to be fair to them, they were difficult economic times. From 1994 to 2003 it was pretty good. We've got a growing economy. We've got resources in Ontario, in

our workforce—our abilities are just at an historic high. Yet when we came to government, we had a \$5.6-billion problem. And it's not just one year; it's structural. That is, if you don't make changes, it will last forever. That's what that means. The fifth and perhaps most important thing that you need to know about this budget is that it will get Ontario on the road to financial health.

How are we going to do that? Straight forward. We're going to run a tight ship. We have the courage to raise the revenues that we need to pay for the health care that we want. We're going to invest in our province, particularly in those areas where we have some weakness. I just came back from northern Ontario. They are thrilled that, for the first time in years, a budget spoke to their specific needs.

I could go on about this thing. I've been talking about only this for the past 12 days, but I want to cede my time to my colleagues who are going to participate. I just want to encourage this House to examine Bill 83 in fine detail and I hope, having done that, this House will give it unanimous support.

1550

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): I'm honoured, as usual, to stand up in this place and speak on behalf of my great constituents in London-Fanshawe.

Today we listened to the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Greg Sorbara, start talking about the budget, give us some lead on the budget. It definitely is a very crucial time. The timing for the budget came in the midst of a federal election, which gives the budget a lot of political analysis, a lot of talk in the backrooms and the papers, which have been used by many parties in this province and across this country to slash the Liberal Party, whether provincially or federally. We get the chance, after the announcement of the budget, to go back to our constituents, which we call constituency week.

First, I was honoured and proud of the government, which is led by the Premier, Dalton McGuinty, when they decided to announce and launch the budget from this place, not from private places. Traditionally, this place is meant to be the House of the people of this province. All the main issues should be discussed, and should be started, from this place. This was a very good start and a very positive move on behalf of this government.

As I mentioned, we went to our ridings. We talked to many constituents. We received many different calls. We talked to the media. We held meetings. We called people in to listen to their opinion, their reaction to this budget.

There certainly was a mixed reaction, because many people in this province were misinformed. They've been listening to different signals and messages from different parties, not for the sake of the people of this province, but for the sake of gaining some cheap political advance over what's going on in this province.

I'm one of the people of this province who got the chance to serve and advocate on behalf of a certain area in this province. Let me tell you, the health premium wasn't my first choice. I would say it was not the first choice of any of my colleagues either. Even for the Premier of this province, it was not his first choice. But

when you take over on October 2, take over a government, take over a budget suffering a \$5.6-billion deficit—add to it a social deficit of between \$2 billion and \$3 billion, which is money we owe to municipalities, boards of education and hospitals across the province—you're left without any choices. You're left without any choices unless you use some kind of measurement to live up to your promises.

Our health care in this province was suffering. It was in chaos stage. There was a shortage of doctors. About 1.2 million people in this province have no family doctor to go to. Waiting lists, waiting time to see a specialist was even longer.

I'll give you a life example from my family. My mother was suffering from some kind of medical problem—basically, her varicose veins—and wanted to have surgery. She had to wait two years to see a specialist to do the surgery. In the meantime, within two years' time, her varicose veins exploded twice. She was lucky my dad walked in the house. He found her swimming in her blood. It's not what we're looking for. It's not what the people of this province are looking for.

They're looking for good service. They're looking for good health care when they need it. It wasn't found anywhere in this province. People like my mother are like others suffering from the same problem. Some people with cancer problems have to wait to see a specialist. They're lucky if they're still alive to see that specialist; and in the other systems, people with heart disease etc, the list goes on and on.

That's what we have in this province. Besides that, we have a shortage of nurses. Nurses were leaving the province, going away, because they were mistreated by the past government, mistreated and put on a part-time, not full-time, basis. You know that you cannot raise a family working part time these days. They've been forced to work different jobs, three full-time jobs sometimes, to raise their families. Some of them decided to leave this province for other provinces, and sometimes went across the border.

Shortage of family physicians: As I mentioned, many doctors in this province won't accept new patients. At the same time, we have 2,000 foreign-trained doctors driving taxis, delivering pizzas, doing different jobs not related to their expertise. We don't know the reasons. I spoke with many of them. They passed all the required exams to be eligible to practise in this province and then they are not given permission, the chance to go to residency, which would allow them to be family physicians in this province. I was proud when I heard the Minister of Finance say in this budget that about 200 foreign-trained family physicians will be permitted, will be financed, to enter the profession in this province.

Also, our health care was suffering from lots of problems—all institutions, all buildings, all technology—and this budget will finance nine MRI and CT scanners across the province to help lower the waiting times.

Other things: They were going to hire 8,000 nurses on a full-time basis in order to deliver good service for the

great people of this province. I got the chance last week, with the Minister of Agriculture, the Honourable Steve Peters, to visit one of the senior citizens' homes in my riding of London-Fanshawe. We spoke with the seniors and with management, the administration, and it felt so great when they told me that this was the first time in the last 17 years that they got an increase of 3%. Over the last 17 years, this is the only time they got a 3% increase to support their needs. The minister said, "I know 3% is not enough, but it's a good step toward increasing support for the people who work hard in their lifetime to create this beautiful province of ours."

The story goes on. The people in this province deserve great attention. They deserve great respect because they work hard for their money. They deserve good health care. They deserve a good institution and a good nursing home and good facilities, when they get old, that they can go to and get treated with respect and dignity. It's not what we heard from the news. I guess everybody heard about how much abuse was going on in many seniors' homes across the province, and about how this government stepped in and hired the honourable member Monique Smith to create a report about these institutions, about this segment of our government's responsibility. That report came after great consultation throughout the province, listening to many citizens, many senior citizens, many administrators on how to tackle the issue. All of us were astonished when we heard about the abuse that was going on in these senior citizens' homes.

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Also, we didn't launch the budget—because we wanted to launch a budget—without respect for the people of this province. This government started a new process that is unique in the history of Ontario: We consulted the people of this province before we launched this budget. We went from city to city and town to town holding meetings. We listened to the people of this province and what they were saying about tackling the deficit, about this budget, about how we can improve our life, how we can have a responsible government and good finances in this province.

After listening to many speakers, many constituents, many people of this province, we learned a lot. We learned about the concerns of this province. They told us they wanted good health care, good education, good social programs. They told us they wanted us to look after vulnerable people in this province. That's how the budget came about, to answer the requests of the great people of this province.

Any government, any nation, won't grow, won't prosper, won't advance unless they have a good education system. Our education in this province was suffering from a lot of problems: living in chaos, living in a war zone between parents and government, with a government that treated teachers like criminals. The three pillars of the education system were in chaos. It was a war. There was no respect from government to teachers, from teachers to parents, from parents to teachers. It was a mess. It was chaos.

This budget answers the teachers' questions. I got a chance last week to go with the Honourable Chris Bentley, the Minister of Labour, to the Catholic board of education in London. We listened to them and we announced the support this government is giving to the boards of education across this province. I listened to them. They said to us, "We're not looking for money; we're looking for respect. It's about time this government placed respect before money." That's what we're delivering. We're talking about respect. We're talking about respecting people who give their life and their time to educate our young children, to prepare this nation for the future. That's what this budget is all about: strengthening the education system and strengthening our commitment to the people of this province.

One of the most important commitments we made before the election, and delivered after the election, was the 20 students per class from kindergarten to grade 3. It was very important to lower that class size to allow teachers to give a good and proper education to our young kids.

Also, I was reading in the paper last week about a school in St Thomas, a city beside London. The school is more than 100 years old and is collapsing. They have no proper utilities, no proper classes. In the wintertime it's chaos because they have no heat, or the heat is just poorly distributed in this school. Also, in the summertime you cannot live. It's like an oven. That's not the kind of facility we're looking for in this province. As the Minister of Finance said, we live in the richest province in North America. We deserve better attention. That's why our government addressed this issue. We're going to deliver, to strengthen those schools and make sure they're equipped with the proper equipment to help our students learn more and advance in this life.

Also, I had the honour to visit Fanshawe College with our Premier last week, to talk to the teachers, the educators and the administrators in that college. As you know, Fanshawe College is one of the finest colleges in this province and delivers a very good education. But they were suffering from lack of support, lack of funding.

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): Did you fix that?

Mr Ramal: Definitely. We're working on it by creating good communication. When the Premier went to visit that school and listened to the concerns of the administrators and the teachers, I think that was a very good step toward fixing that situation, and also pushing our students to apprenticeship, recognizing the economic future of this province, to create talent and to create technical people fit for any growth in this future.

Let me tell you, from that visit, all the teachers and administrators were very happy. They were very pleased to listen to the Premier talking about his commitment to the education system in this province. I thank them.

I'm honoured to have the chance to speak on this budget. Hopefully, by talking more about it, it becomes very clear to all the people in this province that they can see the good in this budget. It will be the first time that

people in this province work with the government in order to reconstruct our health care, our education system, our social programs, and help us support the vulnerable people in this province.

Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): I just want to say what a pleasure it is to stand in this Legislature today and speak in favour of Bill 83, the centrepiece of the budget, the piece of legislation which is going to implement so many of its measures. I want to begin by publicly congratulating both the Minister of Finance and his parliamentary assistant, the member from Eglinton-Lawrence, for the hard work they put into this budget.

Like all members of this House, I've had a chance to be in my constituency over the last week, not only to speak with people about the budget but also to read the analysis in the newspaper and listen to the discussions on television and radio.

It's interesting that there are two views of this budget. One, which we heard today in question period—and I anticipate some of my colleagues from the Conservative Party will be raising this—is the “gotcha” view of the budget. They say that in the campaign—and this is correct—we said that we had a plan we were going to implement without asking Ontarians to pay more directly. Then our budget came out and it presented a plan which did ask Ontarians to pay a little bit more. “Gotcha,” they yell, and they write their columns in the Toronto Sun and stand in question period, but what's interesting is that their analysis begins and ends there. That's their entire analysis. It's what I like to call the “gotcha” budget.

Then there's another way to look at the budget, and I'd like to take a few minutes this afternoon to outline that. I go back to the recent election campaign, a campaign where I knocked, as did many of my colleagues, on literally thousands of doors. What we heard from the people of Ontario is that they were in trouble. They were in trouble because our services, principally health care and education, were failing. We heard about overcrowded, crumbling classrooms. We heard about textbook shortages. We heard about low standardized test scores. Morale in the classroom had reached an all-time low, as we had a government which had declared war on our teachers.

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I had the pleasure, as an alumni, to visit my old elementary school. I entered that school in 1970. I went to the library, and the same carpet was there that had been there since 1970. Last year or the year before, they had thrown out a book entitled *Some Day Man Will Reach the Moon*. We laugh, but it's sad. This was the state of their education system.

Then we have health care. In my community, we're crippled by a shortage of family doctors. We have long line-ups at emergency rooms. We have tremendous waits for major surgery. Yet, at the same time, we have a recognition among voters—because the voters have a certain wisdom that I don't think we always recognize—that health care is a bit of a black hole. They want to

know that any money, any additional funds we put into that will go to repair the system.

We came forward and said, “We want to govern in a different way.” We had a Conservative government that had been in power for eight years, and we had been governed by an agenda that talked about tax cuts—mainly to the well-off and to corporations. We had a government that had starved our essential services of funding. We had a government with a lack of ambition. Their ambition was about Ontario having a lower tax rate than Mississippi. Once again, that was the beginning, middle and end of what they were—

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): A race to the bottom.

Mr Milloy: A race to the bottom.

We're not opposed to low taxes. We're not opposed to balanced budgets. In fact, we follow them. What we want, though, is to have taxes that reflect the true cost. What we said in the election campaign is that, first of all, we'd cancel the proposed Tory tax cuts. We put forward an independent plan which had been looked at and verified by an independent auditor. We put forward a plan where we would cut the Tory tax cuts, where we would take that money and invest it in services, to try to respond to the people of Ontario. That plan was checked and rechecked. We had forensic accountants, we had economists. It was a workable plan. But our mistake was that we based that plan on the public figures that had been put forward by the previous government.

Mr Yakabuski: You should have trusted Gerry Phillips.

Mr Milloy: He talks about trust. He says we should have trusted Gerry Phillips. You know what? We trusted Mr Eves, the then Premier of this province.

On May 6—I keep this in my desk—I have an excerpt from Hansard where the Premier stood up and gave some interesting quotes. He told this House—and he gave these quotes with references—“On September 22, on CHRO, then-Premier Eves said, ‘No, we will not be running a deficit this year.’ On Global TV on September 27, a few days before the election, he said, ‘We will balance this year.’ CKVR, on September 30, he said, ‘We will balance this year.’ Then, during the course of the leaders' debate, right in the thick of the campaign, he”—this is Mr Eves—“told the people of Ontario, ‘There won't be a deficit this year.’”

At the same time, they put forward a document called *The Road Ahead*, which contained \$10.3 billion in promises. But what was interesting was, we had put our plan out for independent verification; the Conservatives refused. They didn't need auditors and forensic accountants to come in.

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): They don't like auditors.

Mr Milloy: No, they don't like auditors.

We won the election. Remember, going back to the beginning of my remarks, what it was about? It was about health care and education. It was about eight years

of neglect. We went out to the people of this province and said, "We're going to be preparing our first budget. Tell us what this budget should be about." Not surprisingly, they reaffirmed exactly what they had told us in the election. They said, "Fix the services," and to do it in a way that holds us accountable.

But we had a problem. Despite the words we heard from the former Premier, the leader of the Conservative Party, when we called in the former Provincial Auditor to do a verification, we found a \$5.6-billion deficit. All of us, as Liberals, have had to put up for years and years with how the Conservatives were great fiscal managers. But you know what we found out? We found out that the emperor had no clothes. We found out that there was a \$5.6-billion shortfall.

We had a mandate. The mandate was to fix health care and education. We had a purpose: to go in and start to reinvest in those services, and we had to do it in a fiscally responsible way. So we developed a plan. First of all, we said we would have a four-year plan, which would give a multi-year overview and bring some sanity to budgeting and forecasting. Second, we said we would balance the budget. We'd do it in a gradual way so we didn't hit those who were most vulnerable, to allow us the room to address those services. Next, we put our own fiscal house in order.

Our budget holds the line on spending. It restricts program increases to 1.9% a year over the next four years and outlines targets for cost savings. The budgets of 15 ministries are either flatlined or decreased. I ask you to compare that with previous provincial budgets. Between 2000 and 2003-04, provincial program spending increased by 22%, far exceeding tax revenues, which actually declined by 0.6% during that period. At the same time, we've asked the Chair of Management Board to find further savings and efficiencies every year.

Interjection: Then they had the Belinda budget.

Mr Milloy: The Belinda budget.

Then we asked Ontarians to contribute. What Ontarians have told me over and over again is that they will contribute for better services if they believe, first of all, we will be able to deliver those services and deliver them in a fiscally responsible way. It was a hard decision by this government, but it was a decision about fulfilling our mandate. It was a decision about going forward as a government with what we had been elected to do.

I began my remarks talking about the "gotcha" budget. I always ask people—when you read and hear some of the analysis, it's almost like they're saying, "You introduced health care premiums so you could get a raise." None of us in this Legislature is getting a raise. In fact, our cabinet colleagues will be taking a pay cut. We're asking people to contribute to the health care system so we can fix it. That's one of the reasons we brought forward a premium. One hundred per cent—every cent—will go to fixing our system.

What else are we going to do through this budget? We're going to budget for results. We'll have a constant review of our programs and priorities and ask ourselves,

"Could it be done better?" We, as a government, are going to be establishing benchmarks so that four years from now we can go to the people of this province with a real report card and say, "This is the progress we've made in health care. This is the progress we've made in education."

Let's just take a look at a few of the investments we are making, in the few minutes I have left. Take health care, for example. Rather than continuing to throw money into a black hole, we established targets for a variety of improvements to our services. We've made key investments in more efficient and cost-effective areas of our system, such as primary care and home care. We've invested in public health in an effort to keep people out of our hospitals and health care facilities.

The budget delivers an additional 36,000 cardiac procedures, 9,000 cataract surgeries and another 2,300 joint replacements each and every year. We're investing more than \$600 million to support and reform primary care by opening up 150 new family health teams and boosting funding to our 54 existing community health centres. We'll be providing home care to an additional 95,700 Ontarians by the year 2007-08 and an additional investment of \$406 million a year to our long-term-care facilities.

In education, we're investing some \$2.6 billion, meeting the Rozanski requirement to make sure our kids get the type of education they deserve.

Standing here as the member from Kitchener Centre, I'd be remiss not to talk about infrastructure. The budget outlines a series of ambitious targets in terms of our public infrastructure. To the people in my region, one of the big priorities is a light rail transit system. A few days before the budget, and as was outlined in the budget, our government came forward to announce support for the next step in this ambitious program. We'll be funding one third of an environmental assessment study which, if it proceeds, I'm optimistic will result in about two years from now in all three levels of government coming forward to see it proceed. This is the type of vision that my community likes. This is the type of sound investment this government is making in this budget.

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So much about the last eight years has been taking away. It's been going into a system and slowly draining it. It's time for us to reinvest. I talked to people in my constituency over the last week. What they told me is that they want a government that's responsible. They want a government that will go forward and address their types of priorities. They're concerned about their schools and their health care system. What we've done is come forward with some ambition for a change. We've come forward and said, "Let's invest in these areas. Let's establish some benchmarks of what we want to see succeed, and let's move forward."

I think that one of the most important things is that at the end of the four years, as I mentioned, we'll have a report card. But also at the end of the four years, in a piece of legislation, a companion piece to Bill 83—we're

going to be bringing forward an act which is going to invite the Provincial Auditor to take a look at our books and make sure that what we present to the Ontario people is 100% accurate, so that four or five years from now we don't have a situation of a budget coming forward, after an election, where we say, "Oops, I'm sorry. We had \$5.6 billion that we forgot to tell you about," and so we don't have parties going into an election campaign saying, "Here's our program based on the money we find in the public accounts, or the figures that are in the public accounts," but we find out afterwards that they're inaccurate.

People want government to be responsible. People want government to invest, and invest wisely. That's what this budget's about, and that's the approach this government has taken.

I support Bill 83. I support this budget. I think it's going to lay the foundation for a strong Ontario to start the rebuilding we were elected on last October.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I think one of the things we want to try to get across to the people of Ontario is that this budget is a transformation budget. Our health care system is not just about spending and investing more money; it's about breaking down the silos and the barriers that exist between hospitals, communities, doctors, nurses, long-term care facilities and home care. We've got too many divisions, too many silos that don't talk to each other. We need to transform health care. If we don't transform it, we're going to be doomed with longer waiting times for cardiac surgery.

Many of you members know that we get the calls in the office from mothers, literally crying, saying, "I've got my 31-year-old daughter, with two children, who's just been diagnosed with breast cancer, and I can't get her any chemotherapy. What can I do?" Those are the calls we're responding to in this budget.

I know it's important to have the eye test at the optometrist's, and I know it's important to go to the chiropractor, but this is a budget where we're trying to make some realistic, tough choices, of saying there are people who are lingering in pain for two years waiting for a hip replacement. Those calls are coming to our office and have been coming for years. It's getting worse.

The condition of our nursing homes is deplorable. We had the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health go across the province. She can tell you the horror stories in the nursing homes. The opponents of this budget say, "Well, never mind that." Well, we are minding the nursing homes, because our seniors deserve dignity in nursing homes. They deserve a bath more than once a week. They deserve a nursing home that doesn't have rodents running through it—I got a call last week about that. We're putting \$190 million into nursing home care. We're making sure there's a nurse on hand.

Yes, nurses. We've had nurses thrown out of our hospitals in the last number of years. We're trying to bring them back with this budget. We don't have enough nurses at the bedside of sick people. We have an immunization program in this province that basically doesn't allow for the immunization of poor people.

I know that Minister Smitherman was at a hospital, and the pediatrician walked up to the minister and said, "Can I give you a hug, Mr Smitherman?" This is a pediatrician. He said, "By allowing children to get immunizations for chicken pox, meningitis and pneumonia, you've done more with the stroke of a pen than I've done in 37 years as a pediatrician." That's what a pediatrician told the Minister of Health. Another pediatrician at Jane and Finch said, "Finally I can offer families that come into my office immunization. I couldn't before." Which family, in some of the poorer areas of this province, can afford \$600 to immunize a child?

In this budget, there's going to be \$600 as a result of paying a bit more through premiums, making these services available. So it's not just about all the negative things you hear about a budget. This budget is an investment in transforming our health care system.

If you look at seniors, there's a baby boom bubble coming where there will be more seniors. We're going to have to start to get smarter in how we provide health care for seniors. One senior phoned me up and said that there's nothing in the budget for seniors. I said, "Well, wait a minute. I think that out of the \$30 billion spent on health care, half—\$15 billion—goes to people 65 years of age and over." They need that first-quality health care. God bless them, they're living longer, but we have to make sure they don't live longer in pain and in dirty conditions in nursing homes, without the hip replacement, without the proper cardiac treatment they need. So we have to have more revenue to give seniors the dignity they deserve in health care. Again, half of the health care budget goes to people 65 years of age and over—\$15 billion out of \$30 billion—but we're going to need more, because we're getting a demographic bubble coming through. We're going to need more than we have, so we're telling the people of Ontario to pay a little bit more—and I know it's painful, but it's the reality we face—because this is a very good health system that needs transformation.

We can sit on our hands and talk about more tax cuts, as the last government did, or we can promise to have the lowest tax jurisdiction in North America or the world. What good is that to a senior who needs that hip replacement? What good is that to a child who needs that immunization for meningitis? It's no darned good at all. What good is a tax cut to that person living in a rat-infested nursing home? No good at all.

This is not just about numbers; it's about people who need better quality health care. It's about cancer care. We need to give that speedy treatment to people with cancer. It's about cardiac care. It's about creating good places for nurses to work—another 8,000 nurses. It's about transforming this province with family health teams. There are too many people in this province without family doctors. We're going to, with this budget, create 150 new family health teams to help 167,000 real people. It's not just numbers; it's people.

If you pick up the right-wing rags in this province, you'll never hear about this item in the budget: that we're

going to create 150 new health teams; that there will be 95,000 more people who are going to get home care—95,000 more people serviced with home care. That's \$440 million more for home care. You'll never hear the Conservatives talk about the fact that this is in the budget. Do they care about home care or not?

Do they care about the fact that we're also going to be doing something very important in terms of our schools? Our schools are in a very, very difficult state. We're giving them \$2.1 billion. That's not only going to buildings; it's going to children—the buildings will get some help too, which you know they need.

That's why we are saying that this money in this budget goes primarily to help people, whether you're in a nursing home, a school and you need special education—it's for children and it's for seniors.

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One of things, again, you won't read in the right-wing rags is that there is a property tax enhancement for seniors of low and moderate income. Whether you're a tenant or a homeowner, there is going to be \$85 million more this year to help seniors deal with property taxes.

As you know, in this budget, too, we have frozen property taxes on commercial. Right across the province there is no increase. On education, the province has also frozen that. There are no increases in this budget for property taxes. You'll never hear the Conservatives talk about that.

Also, once and for all we're going to clean up that Conservative mess called MPAC. A lot of people don't understand it, unless you maybe owned a sugar bush in Ontario this last year. MPAC is the Municipal Property Assessment Corp. Next year, we're saying, "Let's fix MPAC." There will be no reassessment next year. We're going to clean up the mess at MPAC that has been essentially out of control. The lack of control over property assessments was a result of the last government, which basically created the most monstrous property tax legislation in the civilized world. We're beginning to clean it up. No reassessments next year. We're going to change the cycle so there's some sanity to it. We're going to give people time to actually appeal—they're actually going to be able to appeal their taxes—and get reconsideration. So there's going to be reform of the assessment system, the mess that this last government created in assessment, the assessment nightmare of Ernie Eves and company.

There are also little things; there are nuggets in this budget. For instance, farmers who worked their whole life—and I know the Conservatives don't care about what's happening in rural Ontario, but there are people struggling on farms throughout Ontario, and they will be able to pass on their farms to their family without paying land transfer tax. I think that's a good thing to do. Also, if you live in a life-lease situation—there are over 70,000 life-lease apartments all over Ontario—they will also be exempt from land transfer tax. That saves them about \$1,200 each.

So there are things that help people again this year, because of the money we gave the Toronto Transit

Commission and that we're giving transit commissions all over Ontario for building, like Kitchener-Waterloo, Ottawa—we believe in public transit. And you'll never hear the right wing talk about the fact that we're going to start to give part of the gas tax to cities for transit. In October this year, we're giving \$150 million as part of the gas tax to municipalities, so that this year in Toronto we didn't have a fare increase. That also affects real people. There is no fare increase in Toronto, thanks to this budget.

There are good things in this budget that you'll never hear the right wing talk about, because there are very few tax cuts. The only tax cuts in here are—we're removing some taxes that are job killers. The capital tax, which is basically a tax on everything that moves, is being phased out. But generally speaking, it's an investment in people. It's a commitment to the fact that if we don't reaffirm our long-term—

Interjection: Commitment.

Mr Colle: Not necessarily; it's a long-term vision, really, of saying that public health care is good, public schools are good and our cities are also good. We need to make a long-term commitment of money to them, and this budget is not about one year; it's about a four-year plan to fix our schools.

That's what people said during the election. Over and over again, when I knocked on doors in Eglinton-Lawrence, they didn't talk about, "Give me tax cuts;" they said, "Give me a good school for my child. Give me a good nursing home for my grandfather. Give me a good health care system so that when I have the cardiac surgery I need, I can go there in a timely fashion. Give my daughter the chemotherapy she needs." That's what this budget is all about. We can't afford to keep on saying to people, "Wait for the chemotherapy. Wait for the cardiac surgery. Wait for the hip replacement." We're telling seniors, "You've got to wait a year and a half for that cataract operation." This budget will enable us to at least get that speeded up so there's going to be more cardiac care, but also cataract operations in a timely fashion for seniors.

These are things that this budget tries to do in a fashion that sometimes people object to, because they say, "Well, we don't want to pay for it."

I know people do pay enough income tax, but just remember, despite what you hear from the right wing, if someone does earn \$24,000, they have to pay \$240 a year in a premium. If they earn \$36,500, they pay \$425 in a premium. If they earn \$48,500, it's \$575, and so on. So generally speaking, the more you make, the more you pay in this premium. I know our NDP compadres—the hearings are all across the province. They kept on telling us—I know the member from East York heard them: "We don't mind paying a bit more in taxes if we get better health care and better education." That's what this budget does. So, at what point—

Interjections.

Mr Colle: Now all of a sudden the NDP are saying, "We didn't really mean that." They all said, "We don't

mind paying a bit more to get better health care and better education and better cities.”

So we’re improving health care in the nursing homes. Public health: We’re uploading it to the province. We’re now going to cover 75%. That’s what we’re doing. We can’t afford to play Russian roulette with another SARS outbreak. We can’t download public health any longer. We’re uploading it so the province is going to pay 75% of public health, because we can’t afford another SARS in this province.

This is a good budget. It’s tough, but it’s fair.

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

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): It’s always a pleasure to rise on a leadoff on Mr Sorbara’s bill. Of course, we’re looking forward to a lot of debate on this particular piece of legislation. We think that this bill, this motion and the budget in general have a lot of problems.

We certainly heard that in the last few days. We had last week off—constituency week. Over and over again—I probably met 1,500 people last week, and I can tell you, there weren’t a lot of people happy with the budget. I understand now that Mr Paul Martin’s not happy either. How this will affect this federal campaign, who knows, but definitely there are a lot of issues around the budget, particularly around the health premium. We think that there are some concerns there, because it may, in fact—although there’s more money maybe for some areas in health care, services have been cut in other areas.

Our main concern is that it will impact the economy, because working families won’t have as much money in their pockets. With that, I think we have concerns. We listened to people like Mr Cordiano talk about the economic benefits and how great Ontario is, and we agree with that. But the fact of the matter is that we have to keep creating those jobs. People need to have a lot more disposable income to do that, and this budget actually takes that away. Those are the concerns we have, along with the fact that, of course, you didn’t campaign on health premiums and that sort of thing. That’s an area that the 12 million people of Ontario will determine in the next provincial election, and maybe even have an impact on the federal election, which we’ll see over the next four weeks.

With that, I thank you for the opportunity to respond.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): It’s fun to listen to the Liberals defending their budget. I think you guys should go out and defend it at the doorsteps and help your federal members to explain to them how misunderstood you are. You need to explain to them all the nuggets of gold that are in this budget. I’m telling you, you’ve got to get out there. Otherwise people are not going to understand the budget and they’re going to hate you for the wrong reason. You don’t want that, for God’s sake. Just get out there and defend the nuggets.

1640

I am telling you, this budget is nothing at all to be proud of. They are whacking working poor people with this budget, with this premium. When you earn 20,000

bucks and you get whacked with \$300, and they say it’s progressive, I’m telling you, that’s indefensible. That’s why they are not going to the doors. A millionaire pays 900 bucks. Mike Colle has stopped at 50,000 bucks, where people are paying \$500. He didn’t go on to say what a millionaire pays. At \$20,000, you pay 300 bucks; if you earn \$1 million, you pay 900 bucks.

Mr David Zimmer (Willowdale): Calm down, Rosario. You’re going to burst.

Mr Marchese: Oh, no, I’m not going to burst, David. You guys are going to burst, not me. In fact, I’m enjoying myself. I am.

Mr Zimmer: I can tell.

Mr Marchese: Yes. I want you, David, to go to your seat and defend this. And do it calmly. Don’t scream at your friends. You’ve got to do it calmly. Convince people that you’re doing the right thing.

This is a budget that’s going to hurt a whole lot of people. This premium is not progressive. A millionaire pays 900 bucks. If you earn \$20,000, you can barely pay your bills. You can’t even pay your rent with 20,000 bucks. You’re going to get whacked with 300 bucks, and he says it’s progressive. I’m telling you, David, you better go and defend it.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): Please forgive my voice. I’m in the middle of allergy season.

Having said that, the member from Trinity-Spadina has brought me to a different point that I want to make. I want to make it quite clear that people with individual taxable incomes of \$20,000 and under will not be paying any of the premium whatsoever.

Clarification is absolutely necessary, because when people have this misinformation we get those telephone calls saying, “Somebody told me they were taking my eyeglasses away from me.” They’re saying, “Why are you taking glasses away from my children?” So they’re not informed enough. Maybe we are guilty of something, not making sure that people understand the details exactly. I want to be sure that people understand this.

In my riding, people are very happy. I want to hear the people on the other side—

Interjections.

Mr Levac: They’re happy about something that I want to make sure people understand. We are moving on brownfields. Brownfields are a very important issue in my riding, where we have 150 acres that need to be re-developed. We’re going to be putting some things forward to do that.

The other important thing I want to make a point about is that we have nine MRIs and CT scanners that are going to be put into the province. Our riding has the spot that we believe is the right place for it. We’re making the case for it. We believe we can get an MRI out of that.

I want to ask the members on the other side to explain why the Ontario Chamber of Commerce is giving the budget a B+. Maybe they are wrong too. The reality is, we had to make some tough choices, choices that are disturbing people. When we have those choices to make, I want to make the point clearly and carefully that when

we look at the other side of the choices made, we understand that the people who are waiting for cataract replacements or hip replacements, the people who are waiting to have their ankles and hands moved so they can once again, through our health care system, improve their status of life, will say, "You know what? I'll take those hips," and understand that.

Mr Yakabuski: I'm certainly sorry to hear that the member from Brant is suffering from allergies. I hope things get better but, unfortunately, probably by next year the government will delist that medication. He's not the only one who is suffering from allergies. Apparently, Paul Martin is suffering from allergies too. He's become very allergic to the presence of Dalton McGuinty.

Mr Marchese: You're kidding?

Mr Yakabuski: Oh, I'm not kidding, Rosario. He doesn't want to have anything to do with Dalton McGuinty. He'd like for Dalton McGuinty to go on a foreign vacation. He'd like for people to forget the word "McGuinty." On top of that, Dalton McGuinty's own brother David McGuinty, running federally in Ottawa South, seems to have caught that allergy bug. He doesn't want his brother coming around to help him. "No, no, you're very busy," he says. "You're the Premier of the most populous, prosperous province in this country. Please stay on the job. They need you. I'll get along without you here in Ottawa South. I swear, somehow by hook or by"—you know what—"I'm going to get elected without your help, big brother." So he's developed those allergies too.

The whole province is developing these allergies to Dalton McGuinty. Where his popularity was soaring in October, it's gotten very, very meagre as we approach the month of June.

Mr Marchese: John, there's a vaccination for allergies now.

Mr Yakabuski: There is. Yes, it's called a referendum. My colleague Frank Klees is pushing that referendum. If we could have that referendum, the people of the province of Ontario could be cured of their allergic reaction to this budget, this budget that has some of them lying awake at night.

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

Mr Colle: First of all, I just want to correct the misinformation. On \$20,000 you pay not one cent in premiums. On \$21,000 you pay \$60. OK? Also, a person earning a million dollars in the province of Ontario pays \$400,000 in income tax, which includes a surtax on health—which is still there. But the NDP will not mention that.

But what I want to talk about, is that—oh yes, someone mentioned the economic impact of spending money on health, for instance. In Hamilton, the number one employer is the Hamilton Health Sciences Centre. So if I'm hiring nurses, if the government is buying MRI machines, if we're getting better care in nursing homes, I think that stays in the economy. I don't think it goes to the Cayman Islands like the tax cuts did. It stays here in Ontario. It stays in Hamilton.

So this budget is really to see where you stand. Are you just willing to talk about better health care, schools or cities? Are you in favour of shorter waiting lists for cardiac care or cataract operations? Are you in favour of really hiring back those nurses, or just paying lip service that you want the nurses back? You just can't wish the nurses back. You have to actually pay for the nurses, folks.

What about the family health teams? Are you in favour of having doctors in rural communities or are you not? Are you just in favour of talking about it? Are you in favour of better home care or do you just want to talk about better home care? Are you in favour of new long-term care beds or do you just want to talk about the beds? What about immunization for children who can't afford it? Are you for that or do you just want to talk about it?

This budget doesn't just talk about it. It has a four-year plan to do something about fixing our hospitals, schools and cities. We're doing the right thing. It's a tough thing. We don't just talk about it, we're doing something.

Mr Dunlop: Mr Speaker, can we have unanimous consent to stand down our leadoff time please?

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Yes, there is.

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'm pleased to participate in debate on Bill 83, An Act to implement Budget Measures. I have to say that contrary to the member from Trinity-Spadina, who earlier in his debate said that he's rather enjoying this, I'm not enjoying this at all. The fact of the matter is that right across this province people are not enjoying this. The reason they're not enjoying it is because they are reeling from the effects of a government that has presented in this place a budget that is contrary to a commitment that was made by the leader of that party—now the Premier—running in an election.

I've just come from a week of traveling across the province. I can tell you that whether it was in Ottawa or Cornwall, whether my meetings took place in Kingston, Belleville or Brockville, whether I was in Trenton or, more recently, in York region and Toronto, there is a very consistent thought on the minds of Ontarians. The thought is that they don't know what to do with what has just been done to them. They thought that they had a commitment that was made to them by a political party. The commitment was very clear: It was that there would not be an increase in taxes.

1650

Now, we hear from the members of the government—and I know that these are the words they're being told to say by their scriptwriters and by people in the Premier's office and by people in the Minister of Finance's office in terms of how to sell this budget when they get back to their constituencies. But I can also hear—in fact, I even heard it in question period today, in the voice of the finance minister, who typically is very confident about his position. When we look at how the Minister of Finance conducted himself today in question period, it's very clear that the message is getting through to him, and

I have no doubt that he has heard it from his own backbenchers in his caucus meetings. I'm sure that he's hearing from his cabinet ministers that they are on very, very shaky ground here. What is at stake is not the details of the budget but the integrity of this government, the integrity of the Premier, the integrity of an entire group of individuals who I believe had good intentions, who had no idea that their leader, the Premier of this province, was willing to arrogantly break his promise and then arrogantly break the law by bringing into this House a budget that would be in contradiction of a commitment that he made to uphold a piece of legislation that he voted for in this House, and that's called the Taxpayer Protection Act.

Under the Taxpayer Protection Act, no government, no minister of the government, can table for first reading in this House any legislation that would call for a tax increase without first going to the people of Ontario through a referendum; in other words, getting the mandate of the people of this province to in fact increase those taxes. That legislation was brought forward by our government, the previous government. The purpose of that bill was to ensure that there would be accountability and good stewardship on the part of the provincial government; that if we're to go back to people in this province and ask for more of their hard-earned dollars by way of taxes, we would first consult with them and say, "Here is what we want to do. Here is why we need the additional tax dollars. We need your endorsement."

Mr McGuinty voted for that legislation. It's in place in this province today. The reality is that not only has Mr McGuinty now broken his promise to the people of Ontario that he would not do that, but he has gone one step further, and this is what Ontarians are even more concerned about than that original broken promise. It's the fact that we now have a government that is placing itself above the law. We have a government now in Ontario that effectively is saying to people in this province, "It doesn't matter what the law says. We will do what we choose to do, and, by the way, notwithstanding what the law states very clearly, we, having the authority of government and a majority of the number of seats in this Legislature, will introduce legislation that will actually change the law so that what we're doing now is in fact legal."

If every criminal in this province or in this country had the option to do that, wouldn't that be interesting? If the boys at Enron had the opportunity to say, "Oh, by the way, you know, we broke the law. We're doing something or we did something that was in fact in contradiction to statutes in place. But after the fact, here is what we'll do: We'll just change the law and legitimize what we did."

In no uncertain terms, that's precisely what this government is doing. That's what people right across this province are angry about. They will not let this government forget. Unless members individually stand up and are prepared to object to what their leadership, their Minister of Finance, their Premier, perhaps others on the

front bench are willing to do so arrogantly, unless they stand up and say, "As an individual member of the Legislature I am prepared to say no," they will take on to themselves the same guilt that right now is being carried by the Premier and by the Minister of Finance.

To that end, I introduced a piece of legislation in the House today. It is a private member's bill. This bill is intended to give us in the Legislature an opportunity to do the right thing, notwithstanding what the government has done. This bill will effectively affirm the Taxpayer Protection Act. For the benefit of members and of those who are interested in this issue, I would like to read into the record the preamble of this bill that sets out very clearly why it's important that this Legislature take action. The preamble reads as follows:

"On September 11, 2003, Dalton McGuinty, before his election as Premier, signed a written pledge 'not to raise taxes or implement a new tax without the explicit consent of the voters' through a referendum as required by the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999. He also stated publicly that a government led by him would comply with the act.

"The Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999 protects taxpayers by prohibiting a member of the executive council from including in a bill a provision that increases a tax rate or establishes a new tax unless, before the bill is introduced, a referendum is held to authorize the provision.

"On May 18, 2004, the Minister of Finance in Premier McGuinty's government introduced Bill 83"—this is the bill we're debating today—"An Act to implement budget measures) to amend the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999 to create an exception for that prohibition so that a bill can be introduced to include the following two taxes." One of those taxes is the health premium that we discussed today.

"For many reasons, it is vital for the government of Ontario to comply with the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999, as it read on May 17, 2004, the day before" this bill "was introduced" for first reading.

The preamble of my bill sets out those reasons. I'd like to share those with you and with people across this province. "Those reasons include protecting the right of the taxpayers of Ontario to receive government that is fiscally prudent...." I don't think it's too much to ask that people across this province have the right to expect prudent government and government that is "accountable to them and ensuring the integrity of the political process, whereby the government of Ontario keeps its promises on fiscal matters except if it receives the permission of the electorate to change them." That's what is at issue here. "Restricting new taxes and tax increases helps to ensure the well-being of the Ontario economy and to preserve Ontario's economic competitiveness."

1700

This bill, which I urge all members of the Legislature to support, will effectively force the Premier, force this government, to do what they said they would do, and that is to at least honour the taxpayers in this province with the opportunity to vote in a referendum on any tax in-

creases. I also would expect, and I hope, that the Premier would allow his members to have a free vote on this issue so they can at least protect their own integrity.

Bill 83, the budget that's under consideration here, is an absolute attack on people across this province. Whether it's through the health premium or through the delisting of chiropractic services or physiotherapy services or eye testing, it is an affront to the people of this province.

To begin a process in this Legislature, to give voice to people across the province, I introduced a petition that is starting to come in from all across this province. This petition has now been in circulation for no longer than five days. It's available on my Web site. People are downloading it right across the province. This is just an example: literally thousands of signatures on this petition in just a few short days. Contrary to the member from Brant, who said in his debate that people who reside in his riding are happy with this budget, I say to the member that we have numerous constituents from Brant who have signed this and they are not happy; they are not at all happy. This petition effectively challenges the government, challenges Mr McGuinty, to keep the law. This is a petition to force Premier McGuinty to obey the Taxpayer Protection Act.

It reads:

"Whereas the McGuinty government's 2004 budget will break the taxpayer protection law by not conducting a referendum on tax increases; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty signed an election pledge on September 11 ... not to raise taxes without the explicit consent of voters through a referendum;...

"... the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario" to at least give the people of Ontario an opportunity to have a say.

So we will do through this House, and I as a member of the Legislature, what we can to at least hold this government's feet to the fire to do the right thing and to respect the law of this province.

I'm not the only one who is concerned about it.

The Ontario Taxpayers Federation today put out a release indicating that they are taking action through the courts. They are filing a lawsuit today against this government on the same premise, that what they're doing is in fact illegal, and to simply, through this legislation, create for government a loophole so it can justify what they're doing today illegally being legal tomorrow. Even the taxpayers' federation and the literally hundreds of thousands of people who support the good work of the taxpayers' federation are joining in this campaign.

Linda Leatherdale from the Toronto Sun is joining this battle in her column. She's urging her readers to get involved in this campaign.

The National Post, through the Financial Post, is taking up this battle. Why? Because they understand that what is at stake here is the very integrity of government.

How can we in this place simply passively accept that government can do this to taxpayers at will without putting up the appropriate and necessary resistance?

We'll put up that resistance, and I know that the members opposite, who are in the government today and have the opportunity to speak out, feel as I do at the unjustness, and they cannot justify what has taken place. There are members of the back bench—

Mr Marchese: Tories for the poor.

Mr Klees: I understand that the member from Trinity-Spadina is concerned about this issue, and rightfully so. While we don't agree on a lot, because we have a very different view of the world, quite frankly, on this point we can actually join and go arm in arm in protest against this government. I know that even cabinet ministers have serious concerns about this, because when they went back to their constituents last week, during constituency week, I know they had calls and e-mails and people coming into their constituency offices saying, "What are you doing? Why are you betraying us? Why are you attacking us?"

In fact, the member from Prince Edward-Hastings was on a call-in show. He himself, as a backbencher and a member of the government, said, "You know, I disagree with this." In fact, his call to action was—and I hope he's right. In fact, I plan on putting this to the government tomorrow. The member of the backbench said, "This is something that I believe we can deal with in committee, and the government will reverse its position in committee." Isn't that interesting? I'm going to be very interested to see how that works and whether or not the Minister of Finance and the Premier will be willing to put this matter to the standing committee and truly allow their backbenchers to vote freely on this if in fact that's how they feel.

We have before us a bill that, in detail, is breaking trust with the people of Ontario. Even the Prime Minister today made it very clear that what the Premier of this province has done is unacceptable. Even the Prime Minister today said that no one in politics should make a promise they cannot keep. His quotation today is that any promise made by a politician should be made to take account of unexpected circumstances.

This government claims a deficit and justifies their breaking of the law, their breaking of the trust, on the basis of a deficit that, had they gotten to work here in this place the day they were elected, they would not have had. They had months to deal with that. There were efficiencies they could have found.

The people of Ontario are tired of your excuses. Government is not elected to give people excuses; government is elected to enact good government. You have failed to do that. This government has failed the people of this province and they will pay for it.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): It is always a pleasure to listen to my friend from Oak Ridges. He is right; we don't often agree on many things. I want to start off with what we don't agree on, and that is his whole reliance upon the Taxpayer Protection Act. I would give much more credence and credibility to that act and to the member had the Conservatives followed the Taxpayer Protection Act in their own term in office. We need to

remember that the last year they were in office, they flouted their own act, the act they had brought in and which they had constantly spoken in favour of. They went right around the act.

I do not expect that this government is going to do anything except go around this act too, so don't start hollering too much against the Tories, because you're going to do exactly the same thing. The reason you are going to do it is that this act, from its inception, was fundamentally flawed. No act of a previous government can bind the actions of a future government. You're not going to be bound by this act, even though you, as Liberals, sitting on this side of the House, voted with the Tories for the act when it came in. I want to remind you that you did that too, but the whole act is flawed, and let's get around that.

1710

The reality, and where I do agree with him, is that you made specific promises during the election which the electorate expected you to keep. Front and centre in all of those was the now-Premier standing there saying, "I will not raise your taxes. I won't lower them, but I won't raise them either." That is what people remember. That's viscerally what they remember from the election and why I think many of you, if you are out there knocking on doors for your federal cousins, will see that that appears to me, at least in Ontario, to be the number one issue.

I only have two minutes, so I can't say much more. I disagree with the solution, but the premise upon which the solution is based is absolutely right.

Mr Shafiq Qadri (Etobicoke North): First of all, I'd like to begin by correcting some of the misinformation that was put forth by the MPP from Oak Ridges, despite his being always eloquent, always well groomed and perhaps ready to take up the leadership challenge of his party. He referred to the MPP from Brant as being particularly gleeful and happy. I'd like to set the record clear that the citizens of the riding of Brant, ably represented by the Honourable Dave Levac, were actually referring particularly to the fact that this government is moving forward by putting a new MRI facility in that area, as well as some of the movement we're making on the brownfield legislation and taking care of that particular issue.

Also, I'd like to bring to your attention, Mr Speaker, and the people who are listening, the idea of breaking trust. Frankly, the underlying philosophy of the former Tory-led government was divesting Ontarians of all the assets that we hold dear, whether it's the 407, our health care system, the educational sector, our highways, hydro etc. This is really, I think, a fundamental change that we in Ontario are trying to put forth with the McGuinty vision: We don't consider these assets profit centres to be exploited, to be sold off, to be syndicated, to be privatized in the way the previous government did.

Very briefly, as a physician, I can tell you that I am especially pleased to see the massive commitment we are making toward orthopaedic procedures, joint replacements, cardiac procedures, cataracts and dialysis. These

are issues that have been burning for more than a decade. The Conservative approach was essentially to invite American-style corporations to take up profit centres here; ours is not.

Mr Yakabuski: It's always a pleasure for me to follow my colleague from Oak Ridges. The concern I have is why people in this province are so angry and why there are so many thousands of names already assembled on petitions. It is not about the details of the Taxpayer Protection Act; it is the fact that the Premier of Ontario, while he was the opposition leader, on September 11 last year during an election campaign, made the conscious decision to say, "I support the Taxpayer Protection Act."

It wasn't something that he voted on a couple of years ago and the situation had changed or circumstances had changed. Under questioning by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, "Do you intend to follow this act? Do you intend to abide by the rules of the Taxpayer Protection Act if elected? Will you do that, Mr McGuinty?" he said yes and signed that pledge. That is why the people of Ontario are so angry and upset. Dalton McGuinty didn't say, "I'm going to fix health care and education, but I'm going to empty your pockets to do so." He said, "I'm going to give you the health care you need when you need it; the education your children need when they need it; the services you need when you need them. We're going to do that while respecting the Taxpayer Protection Act, and we will not run a deficit in this province."

Well, Dalton McGuinty didn't tell the you-know-what. He broke his promise. That's what angers people in this province. They will forgive a lot of things, but they will not forgive someone who breaks their promise. That will be borne out in the next provincial election.

Mr Marchese: I want to clarify what similarities we have with the Tories, and differences.

Mr Yakabuski: Arm in arm, Rosario, arm in arm.

Mr Marchese: It's not quite like that. What I think he meant is this: Tories have principles on the right, quite true; New Democrats have principles on the left, and that is true.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Like the social contract.

Mr Marchese: Where he and I agree, Duncan, is that we don't know where the Liberals stand. That's what I think he meant. Tories are here, New Democrats here and Liberals are all over the map. Is that correct?

Mr Klees: That's good.

Mr Marchese: That's what I thought.

On the issue of where we differ, do you remember when you cut assistance to welfare recipients by about 22%? I thought that was a serious blow to the poor. I thought it was. But I like to hear Frank say there's an element of "Repent, sinner" kind of politics, where he now is concerned about the poor—God bless, I think it's good. Where New Democrats are on this issue is that when you tax someone with a premium and he's only earning \$20,000 plus one cent, in the next couple of years, he'll be paying 300 bucks.

Interjection: Sixty dollars.

Mr Marchese: Show me that document. Where is that document?

Interjection: Right there.

Mr Marchese: “The plan is fully rolled out in 2005-06. The government will implement OHIP premiums as follows: \$300 for individuals earning between \$20,000 and \$36,000.” Come on. What’s he talking about? A poor individual earning 20,000 bucks gets whacked for 300 bucks; a millionaire, 900 bucks. They say it’s fair; Liberals with a heart say it’s fair. And the finance minister is proud of this budget. Can you believe it, Frank? He’s proud of the budget.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Klees: I’d like to thank the members for their comments. At the end of the day, what counts here is what the people of Ontario think. There will be all kinds of excuses that we’ll hear from the government benches over the next number of months, but the people of this province aren’t buying it. It really does come down to integrity and whom people can trust. They have, in fact, lost trust in this government. They do not believe anything this government will say from this point forward, and that’s really the issue.

What we’re challenging the government to do is at least be straightforward with the people of this province, and if they believe it’s important to raise taxes, that they do so in the context of the law of this province and not simply resort to excuses. That’s really what it’s about.

I want to thank a number of people from across the province who have gone to the trouble of becoming engaged in the political process: Alice Sheridan of Newmarket, who has gone out of her way to send in many of these, Doris Anderson of Richmond Hill, Mr and Mrs Fazio of Bolton, Mr Paul Spence of Unionville, Don Kelly of Gloucester, Mr James Green of Aurora, Mr Peter Kerr of Walkerton, Mr and Mrs Pup of Woodbridge and many hundreds of others who have taken the initiative because they don’t want to give up. They see a government that is arrogant in its abuse of their taxes. They want accountability. They simply want good stewardship from their government. They’re not receiving it. They have the opportunity to do something about it.

1720

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Beaches-East York.

Mr Prue: It is indeed an honour and a privilege to stand here and be the leadoff speaker today, now that we are again an official party and I have one hour to tell you my various thoughts on this bill. Unfortunately, I’m only going to be able to spend 40 minutes today, until 6 o’clock, but I’m looking forward to the 20 minutes to wrap up later.

I look at this entire budget bill, and it’s a very long and very hard and complex bill for most ordinary Ontarians. They look at the bill and have a difficult time understanding many of the facets of the bill. I want to state at the outset in my criticism of this bill that we are opposing the bill not because of the many facets of the bill that

ordinary people can support, but in fact because of the way the Liberals are choosing to get revenue generation.

There can be no doubt that some of the provisions of this bill are long overdue, are needed and will be welcomed, by and large, by the general public of this province. We have all lived through some very tough times. The last number of years have been very difficult, and I will go right back to the NDP days—not to say that they tried to make things difficult, but we were living through a recession in those years. There was not the money to do everything that was necessary, or that the party with which I’m now elected would have liked to do. The money was not there, but they struggled and did the best they could.

The last eight years were quite a bit different, though, because the money was available and a direct decision was made not to spend monies where we in our society needed them desperately. We lived through very tough times when times were good, and that is quite an anomaly in Canadian political life.

We lived through those tough times in our schools, where we saw the schools literally falling apart, a war with teachers, secretaries and caretakers and janitors being laid off, school closures, textbooks going to ruin. We saw all those things, and this new government saw them too. So, when you were presenting your budget, you were looking at ways to improve the rut that took over education in all those years, and who is to say you should not have done it?

We looked at the hospitals and the amount of money you need to run those hospitals after eight very brutal years when not enough money was put into the system, when literally thousands of nurses were laid off and declared redundant like Hula Hoops. We looked at that, and you looked at that. We all saw that happening. We saw an exodus of our personnel leaving the province, and we saw new people who came from abroad being unable to practise. Everyone in this room—or nearly everyone; I won’t speak for my colleagues seated immediately to my right—could see the malaise of our hospitals and wanted to do something about it.

We looked at the crisis in home care. We saw a system that was set up, which hopefully could work and alleviate some of the problems of the hospitals, immediately start to fall apart, where ordinary citizens were replaced by Tory appointees and where the whole system of home care was underfunded and eventually fell apart, to the detriment of people who relied very seriously and very strongly on that type of care coming into their homes so they in turn would not end up in the hospital.

We looked at what happened to children’s services, where there was no money for children and where we saw the poorest of poor children requiring a lot more than there was money or services to accommodate them.

We saw the plight of those on welfare and ODSP. Particularly, I’m going to deal first with people on welfare, who saw their budget slashed by 23%, and then over a period of some eight years saw no increase at all in the funding they had to spend for themselves and their

family, sometimes in very meagre surroundings outside the big cities, oftentimes where there was no work to be had, oftentimes with social, mental and other problems that required government services. They are, and continue to be, forced to live on what can only be called a pittance.

We saw the disabled, who mercifully got a little bit more money on ODSP, but even there they were limited to some \$930 a month with no increases for the last eight years. We saw their plight, and I think anyone with a conscience would resolve to try to do something about that.

We saw the entire mess being made of our hydro for eight years: flipping back and forth between privatization and not privatizing, looking at various schemes, capping rates and all the mess that got into. Any government that was elected would want to try to resolve that issue.

We looked at the environment. It was in complete disarray, with the firing of water, health and meat inspectors, and all the inspectors we once relied upon in this great province being gone. The environment went down and down and down in the province of Ontario and made us susceptible to things like West Nile virus and all the tragedy of Walkerton.

We looked at what happened in the cities, where the cities started to deteriorate because of the government of the days action, of downloading responsibilities without the resources to deal with them, so that cities had more and more on their plate, and less and less money to spend. We saw the deterioration of the cities with the unkempt parks. We saw the deterioration of the cities with potholes. We saw the deterioration of the cities with child and welfare programs being slashed. We saw the deterioration of the cities in a thousand brutal ways.

We saw housing not being built across this great province, to the point that there are literally hundreds of thousands of families looking for decent affordable housing in Ontario. There is no housing that has been built that they can afford. Last but not least, we saw the entire problem that the previous government faced with its own employees: egging them on to strikes, dealing with them brutally, and not bargaining at any time in good faith.

All of those things were there on the plate. All of those things will have to be dealt with by this new government. These are tough things. I am not for a moment going to stand there and say that I expect you to deal with all of those problems in a single year, in a single budget, or possibly even in a single term. But what I'm going to ask you to do is seriously look at changing some aspects of your budget so that you can better deal with these problems and have your solutions accepted by the general public. Even though there is a lot of bravado over there—and to my left—that people are accepting this budget and like the fact that there's now going to be immunization for children in schools, and some other progressive things that the budget contains, there is a lot more angst and anger out there than you probably perceive.

There is angst and anger out there because your budget is not being accepted, because of the methodology

that you are using to tax people when you said you wouldn't. Many people have said—and we in the NDP have called it that ourselves—it's the most regressive budget in modern times in the province of Ontario. Our criticism comes from the budget—not because of what it contains, because as I've said, there are many problems that are going to have to be dealt with, and you are attempting to deal with some of those problems as you deem best; our problem is that you are using a methodology of increasing your revenues which is brutal and which is regressive. The centrepiece of your entire budget is this whole thing of taking \$300 to \$900 per person to pay for health care. It is nothing more, nothing less, than a tax on ordinary working people. It's a regressive tax because the less you make, the greater the percentage you pay to the government for the care. This is the opposite of every other progressive tax that we have in the province of Ontario. It is the opposite, and even worse than, regressive taxes like the provincial sales tax, the GST or the flat taxes that so many people rail against daily. You are doing the same and possibly even worse.

Now, you often talk about, "The poorest of the poor aren't going to have to pay. If they make \$20,000 or less, they are going to be exempt from paying." But who are the people who earn less than \$20,000? Let's look at that. Someone who works 40 hours a week at minimum wage, who will make about \$20,000 a year: That person may, depending on how close they are to the cusp, pay or not pay. Anyone else who makes more than minimum wage is going to be asked to give more money and be taxed.

1730

Every year the government of Canada and the government of Ontario look to the low-income cut-off figures to look precisely at what constitutes poverty in this country, what constitutes poverty in this province. Take a look at those figures. If you want to know who is poor, take a look at those figures. If you live in a large city like Hamilton or Toronto or Ottawa or London, you live in a city of 500,000 or more. It is considered a large city. To live in a large city and not be poor, to meet the low-income cut-off figure which allows you sufficient monies to be able to meet your everyday needs without having to go to food banks and the like, a family of three requires \$28,560. So a single person working, say a single mother working with two children—a family of three—earning \$28,560 would be classified as meeting the low-income cut-off figure. If they make less than that—and I will tell you, there are tens or hundreds of thousands in this province who do—then they will be classified as poor. But being classified as poor is no salvation to them when it comes to your regressive tax because your regressive tax will tax them anyway, even though they're poor, even though they can't make the figure. If they make \$27,000 or \$28,000 a year, they are poor by all the standards which our government and the federal government set, yet you are going to tax them anyway.

Let's look to a family of five living in a place like Hamilton. A family of five living in a place like Hamil-

ton has to have \$38,646 a year in order to not be poor. You make that much money and I guess you're deemed not to be poor, but if you only make \$37,000 or \$38,000—you don't make that extra \$646—you are classified as poor and there are many things you cannot do. One of the things you cannot do is, if you are an immigrant family and you want to sponsor a relative to come to live in Canada, somebody who fits into the family class, and you already have, let's say, a family of five, a man and a wife who is at home looking after three young children, and you earn \$38,645 a year—\$1 below the low-income cut-off figure—you cannot sponsor your relatives. You cannot sponsor your mother, your father. You cannot sponsor a child, if you have a child. You cannot sponsor anyone who fits within the family class, because you are considered too poor to look after that additional person or persons. You're not too poor, though, to pay this new tax because, even though you can't sponsor a relative and even though the federal and provincial governments say that you are living in poverty, this government expects you to pay \$450 in additional taxes for health care,

I will tell you what that's going to do. That's going to drive up the low-income cut-off figures even higher. In 1989, a socially progressive government, a Liberal government, as its cornerstone, did away with the OHIP premiums. You know why they did away with the OHIP premiums? Because they were unfair to the working poor. They determined that those people who had their employers paying the tax were primarily union people who had good-paying jobs and who didn't have to worry about it. It was those who paid it directly—the small business people, the poor, those who were unorganized—who had to pay their own. The Liberal government of the day—Robert Nixon, I'm sure, sitting over there in one of those seats, stood up. David Peterson, who was trying to be a socially progressive Premier of the time, came out with a bill that did away with those taxes. It did away with them, and we have lived in this province for 15 years having the direct taxes pay for our OHIP.

Now we have a government that is diametrically opposed to that socially progressive measure.

Mr Marchese: Trudeau is gone. That's what I think.

Mr Prue: I think Trudeau died some time ago, and his whole philosophy, I think, in the Liberal Party died with him.

Anyway, now we have a government that wants to go back and take the money from the same people that it saved, in part, from poverty all those years ago. We have a government that really doesn't care. I have to tell you that half of the people had their premiums paid by their employer, very different from today, because literally today everybody's is paid from that general pot. So today there isn't the half that you're protecting, that employers are going to look after, because today you're asking everybody except the employer to pay.

This is going to spawn a whole new bunch of things too. This is going to spawn, I'm sure, wage demands, which you should think about, because I'll bet you every

single unionized worker out there is now looking to recoup this money in the next round of bargaining. I'll tell you, every single provincial civil servant, when it comes to the next round of bargaining, will be looking for that \$600 to \$900 each, on top of whatever raise they're asking for, because this is money that has been lost to them and that they will attempt to regain. You had better think about that.

Mr Marchese: But McGuinty won't let that happen.

Mr Prue: Well, I'm not sure whether he's going to let it, but I'm telling you that this is going to spawn that whole bad feeling among organized labour.

Mr Marchese: It's going to be tough.

Mr Prue: They're going to be tough and they're going to fight for it. Don't pretend it's not going to happen, because you know full well it is.

You had a choice as a government. You had a choice and you chose not to do it. You chose the easy way, and perhaps, if you thought it was the easy way, like hitting everybody—

Mr Colle: This isn't easy.

Mr Prue: Yes, I think this was. There were easier ways. There were easier ways for you to do it.

Mr Wilkinson: What's the easy way?

Mr Prue: Well, the easiest way for you to do it was to roll back the surtaxes the Tories took off people who earned above \$100,000 and above \$150,000—the 3% and 6%. That alone would have got you \$1.6 billion from people who could afford it: people like you, people like me, people who could afford it. You've raised \$2.4 billion. I'm going to tell you how you can find \$2.4 billion a lot easier than hitting the little guys. The second thing you could have done was eliminate the employer health tax exemptions, and the third thing you could have done was return the corporate rates to 1999. Those three things, which would not have hit little people at all, would have recouped \$2.6 billion—\$200 million more than you're getting from whacking all these little people, from whacking all these people and making them mad, from whacking these people who are screaming at the doorsteps at your federal cousins, from whacking these people who think that they have been misled. Let me put "Misled" on these great television ads: "I'm not going to raise your taxes." Look me right in the eye.

You could have done it by simply being a little bit smarter than what you have done, because this is a regressive tax, contrary to what the Minister of Finance has said, that he's proud, that it's the only tax in Canada that is prorated on how much you earn. That could be true, but there's only one other province that I'm aware of that actually whacks people like that, and that's the province of Alberta. Most of the other provinces don't have anything of this sort. So whether it's prorated, whether it's on an escalating scale or not, doesn't matter at all, because it doesn't happen in Quebec or Nova Scotia or Newfoundland or Prince Edward Island or New Brunswick or Manitoba or Saskatchewan or even, I think, BC. So let's be real.

You've also done a number of other things that have got people kind of angry, although not angry to anywhere

near the same extent. You are raising the costs and fees on everything that people do, from driving to fishing, to hunting licences, to all of the licences, to all of the fees that you charge for everything from birth certificates to death certificates. This will not affect the ordinary person until, of course, they have to apply for those licences or pay the fees for the services that they require from the province. Those niggling one-time expenses, when they come, will be felt hard, and I will tell you, people will be angry for a long, long time when they see those escalations in costs.

1740

You have also done something that I think is going to make, and has made, a great many people angry in terms of the petitions and letters we are starting to see in all of our offices, and that is the delisting of tertiary health costs in three areas: \$104 million that you plan to save from chiropractic services; \$37 million that you plan to save from optometrist services, people going in to get their eyes tested; and last but not least, some \$16 million for physiotherapy for people who are now going to have to pay for that service as well.

We're looking here at about \$150 million, which is a lot of money, of course, but it's going to cost a lot more aggravation to you as a government to delist and privatize those services, to make people pay for things they have come to expect: to go to a chiropractor when your back hurts, to go to an optometrist when you need your eyes tested, to go for physiotherapy when you require it as a result of a fall or an accident or something that is not covered either in the workplace or by your insurance. Those are medical facilities that people believe they are entitled to and want. To simply delist those in an effort to save money, even if you plan to spend the money in other places like immunization for children, is causing considerable angst.

I ask you, as a government, to stop and think about what you are doing. Hopefully, as one of the members said earlier, spurred on by a backbench Liberal, you will take the opportunity to try to change that when this bill is sent to committee. We certainly would welcome this bill being sent to committee, because we think people will come from across the province to tell you the errors of some of those things you are cutting.

We in the New Democratic Party are also disappointed with how you are dealing with the child benefit clawback. You, as a party, promised going into this election in written letters to the national poverty organizations that you would immediately, as a first act of government, end what the Tories had done for the child benefit clawback; you would end that and you would give the money that has been refunded by the federal government to the poorest of poor families; you would give that back to them in terms of monies that were owing to them. An average family with two children could expect \$233 per month in much-needed funds if they were on social assistance. One or two parents on Ontario disability or if they were working at or near minimum wage could expect \$233 a month. In fact, social welfare reformers

have said that if there was only one thing you did to help the poor, the greatest single thing you could do would be to end the child benefit clawback.

I have to tell you that your budget was woefully inadequate. The suggestion you are making that you are going to give them back that proportion of the clawback which came into effect this year is a pittance. It will amount to only \$7.42, and it will leave the hundreds of thousands of children in our province who live in poverty stuck in that poverty. Quite frankly, I think that is a disgrace.

You have also said as a government that you want to help the poor. The poorest among us, frankly, are those who are on welfare, who have not had an increase for eight years, those who had their wages slashed by 21% by the previous government, those who had their monies slashed by 21% and then a further 13% caused by the erosion of incomes due to inflation over those same eight years, a reduction of 34%.

It must be very hard to live on \$530 a month. I would ask any of the members opposite to dream about having to live on that kind of money for an entire month. I would hazard a guess you couldn't do it for even a week, never mind a month. In fact, most of you would require double or triple that per week even to make it. But we have people in this province who have no other choice.

I spent part of last week with my colleague Gilles Bisson in a tiny little town in northern Ontario called Ogoki. It is a reserve made up of native Canadians. Some 300 people live there, and there is work for only a couple of weeks, three, four, five weeks a year. They work as hunters, sometimes as trappers. They live off the land. They fish. They are hired to ferry people into some of the better fishing spots. They work with the mining and prospecting claims when they can get work. They might work for the Indian band. But the majority of people who live in that town are chronically unemployed. They rely on welfare, and their welfare is some \$530 for an adult male per month, and quite frankly, if you were to go there and if you were to look at the poverty in which they live, I think you would all be appalled. I certainly have seen poverty like that before, but it was totally endemic. It was in almost every single house.

We look, too, to what you have done for the people on ODSP. You promised great things to them, but all that has been delivered is a 3% increase. After eight years of no extra money, seeing their real incomes decline by some 13% due to inflation, they are now being offered 3%. That will take them back to where they were about seven years, six years ago. That 3%, although welcome, amounts to about \$25 per month for a single person who is disabled. They now go all the way up to about \$955 from \$930. For that, they can expect and continue and will always be in poverty, because they continue to make less than \$12,000 a year, and for \$12,000 a year, one cannot expect to live in any kind of housing, in any kind of city or town in Ontario without being forced daily to the food banks. Your \$27, your \$25—whatever it comes out to—is tantamount to one less trip to the food bank per

month than they're doing now, and nothing more. In fact, much of that money will be swallowed up by landlords, I'm sure, in the rental of the properties, when they find out that the people now have that little bit more to spend.

There's so much more that should have been in this budget. The Liberals talked in the last election about how they wanted to improve child care. I don't know how many meetings I went to; I don't know how many Liberals I talked to or heard; they were always saying the same thing: "We are going to give some \$300 million more for child care." Well, the reality is that you're not giving any money in this budget to child care. It has been totally neglected. The thousands of children who are on waiting lists, the many parents who want to go out to work but can't because they cannot find decent affordable child care, are left in the same predicament that they were under the previous government. One could have and should have expected a lot more from Liberals.

We have the whole problem of hydro—how you came close to balancing this budget. Three point nine billion dollars, by sleight of hand, was moved from the taxpayers to the ratepayers. It's a pretty neat accounting trick in this House. People said it was tantamount to Enron or Arthur Andersen. I'm not sure it was quite that good, because it was immediately seen by everyone. What this \$3.9 billion was supposed to be was a guarantee for expensive hydro contracts that were signed between 1980 and 1990. And, in fact, the removal of this will do nothing except drive up the costs of hydro in Ontario. That \$3.9-billion debt that existed with the province of Ontario became a one-year revenue, and has dropped the deficit from \$6.1 billion to \$2.2 billion, which, I guess, to those who are not paying a great deal of attention, looks rather good. In fact, I saw a little tiny newspaper the other day that commended the Liberals for holding the line and for dropping the debt to \$2.2 billion. I think the poor author of that never realized for one second that that isn't what happened at all, that his hydro rates will go up for the next 12 years, and that the government, after this year, will have no source with which to keep the monies down.

The four-year fiscal framework in this document is absolutely appalling. Not only did you rely on the \$3.9 billion of hydro for one year to assuage all the fears of those who were thinking that you were going to run multi-year deficits, but you have left yourself open and you're going to have to scramble for revenues next year. In fact, without that \$3.9 billion, you're not going to have the funds that you're talking about next year at all.

1750

If you look at the projections put forward by the finance minister, he has unreasonable expenditure increases between 2004 and 2007. This year he had a \$4-billion to \$5-billion revenue expenditure necessary. As I've said, we commend you on some of the ways that you are spending that money; not all of them, but at least some of them are laudatory and we would support, like the one cent gas tax to municipalities, like the immunization of children. But you're spending \$4 billion to \$5

billion extra this year. Next year's projection is that you'll only spend an additional \$500 million, \$500 million again in 2006, and \$1.7 billion in 2007. Quite frankly, that cannot maintain the promises that are being made here today, given the fiscal and financial framework that the province finds itself in.

On education: Dalton McGuinty promised to be the education Premier. The present education minister promised that we were going to see great changes in education in Ontario. I have to tell you, the last couple of days have shown how that seems to be falling apart. In newspaper article after newspaper article, in paper after paper, they are starting to talk about how this whole fiscal framework for education is not doing what it was intended to do. People are starting to see the Rozanski report for what it was and what it said and where the money was to be spent. Money had been bled from the education system, there is no doubt.

Rozanski talked about the need for more teachers. Rozanski talked about rebuilding the structure of the schools. He talked about rehiring librarians. He talked about caretakers, secretaries, books and computers. But where is the \$850 million that the Liberals are about to spend? Is it going to any of these things? I'll tell you, very little of the money is going to what Rozanski said.

Some \$450 million, which you don't have, is going to cap class sizes. That's a laudatory goal. I'm not going to tell you that you shouldn't do it. If you had tons of money, I'd tell you that you should, but you don't have tons of money. You're taking \$450 million that you don't have to cap class sizes. I would tell you that is a mistake. You have other, far more pressing priorities than that. Rozanski said you need \$2 billion just to bring the infrastructure and the system back to where it was, and he never even once mentioned class sizes.

You're also going to be spending a lot of unnecessary monies on tests for literacy and numeracy at the expense of things that need to be done in our schools: schools that can be kept open in rural communities and in isolated areas; schools that no longer have vice-principals or principals or librarians or caretakers. That is where, quite frankly, you should be spending the money, and if you have an opportunity at this point, I'm urging you to spend the \$850 million, but please do it wisely. Don't waste it on capping class sizes, as laudatory as that—

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): Greatest news ever.

Mr Prue: They have the greatest news ever. When their school falls apart, they won't be saying it's that good.

On privatization—it sent a chill up my spine. First of all, I was very happy when the Premier started to talk about privatization and he said that we're not going to do it because it's a short-sighted policy, and he's absolutely right. But in the second breath, he says that we're going to leave that option open and we're going to study it for the next year or so. We're going to study the privatization of the LCBO, and that was the one he specifically mentioned. I want to tell you to can the study now. Don't go there. It is a cash cow. It makes \$1 billion a year. It

provides a good service. The public certainly doesn't want you to be selling that off in order to make another infusion of \$1 billion or \$2 billion—

Interjections.

Mr Prue: No, but he said he's leaving it open and I just want to warn you not to do it. That was the statement he made. He made that very statement while presenting his—and I listened very carefully to what he had to say.

You've done some good things. I just want to talk about municipalities and the two-cents on the gas tax. You're on the right track. Certainly it was in our document that we went to the people with, and it was in your document. I commend you for being on the right track on the gas tax. I am not sure that you should do it over two years—I wish you could do it all at once—but I understand the difficulties.

The penny is a good thing, but you're going to have to make a determination as to how that gas tax is apportioned: to which municipalities and for what purposes. I'm going to suggest that you should be looking to put the gas tax where it will get the biggest bang for your buck in terms of transit. Those municipalities that have transit systems should get a significantly higher portion, based on ridership, than those that choose not to have them. It will be an incentive for municipalities that have not invested in public transit to reinvest or to start looking at investing in ways they have never done before, if they're not going to get the money.

However, if you just apportion it across Ontario on the basis of the number of people who live in the town or city, you are not, in the end, going to get the best bang that can be had for that one cent on the gas tax.

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): What about a combination?

Mr Prue: You could look at a combination. I know that a combination could be looked at too, but I'm asking you to base it as closely as possible on ridership as opposed to population. There's no doubt it's going to fall somewhere between the two, but get it as close to ridership and as far from population as you can, without making too many people angry. Enough people are angry at you already, so make sure you don't get too many more angry at you, but do it that way.

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): Why are you getting all the people in Guelph angry at me?

Mr Prue: Well, Guelph needs to have a better public transportation system. You have to convince them that the money will come. You know, "When you build it, the money will come." That's the old adage. Just like baseball, "Build it and they will come."

Notwithstanding the one cent—and it's a good thing—I have to say we remain a little cautious and a little nervous because of the flatlining or the reductions in some 12 ministries. Some of the ministries contained in there do a significant amount of work in municipal infrastructure. If they are going to be flatlined or have their budgets reduced, we are going to see that offset in the municipalities themselves: everything from daycare to public works, to health and the environment. They're all there, and what the municipalities do very much involves them. If you're going to flatline them, you potentially could cause some grief to the municipalities. So be very careful about how that money is flatlined; we'll be looking to the estimates for that.

Interjection.

Mr Prue: I've still got another 20 minutes on the next day. I've got a whole hour's worth of stuff to tell you to do.

In the last minute or so before 6 o'clock, the infrastructure expenditure by this government is actually less than the Tories had in their last three budgets. It's actually less, and it's certainly considerably less than the infrastructure expenditures of the NDP between 1990 and 1995. Now I understand why they had that money then.

Interjection.

Mr Prue: Yes, the deficit was there, but there was also the need to get people back to work. The municipalities were asking for joint projects, and that money was spent. But I'm telling you that infrastructure should be looked at. Slightly under \$2.5 billion is less than the Tories were spending the last couple of years. That needs to be reviewed in clause-by-clause when this goes out to committee, as we hope it does.

Mr Speaker, is this an appropriate time to stop? I can keep going if you want.

The Acting Speaker: It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 pm today.

The House adjourned at 1759.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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