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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 3 June 2004

Jeudi 3 juin 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 3 June 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 3 juin 2004

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET MEASURES ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004

SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 2, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 83, An Act to implement Budget measures / Projet de loi 83, Loi mettant en oeuvre certaines mesures budgétaires.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): The Chair recognizes the member for Nickel Belt.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Speaker, again, I just love this place so much.

The Deputy Speaker: I know.

Ms Martel: The same Speaker is here.

We've got a different item here this evening. I want to tell you why we're opposed to the budget bill. I want to deal first with what the government is doing to delist drugs from the Ontario drug benefit program.

My colleague Marilyn Churley raised this issue in question period earlier this week. She said, "I have a question for the Premier," asking him why the government was amending section 20 of the Ontario Drug Benefit Act "to allow the health minister to take drugs off the formulary without going to cabinet." The Premier said the following in his first response: "I hope that the additional research dollars will be of some benefit, sooner rather than later." Then he went on to say, "We made a very specific commitment during the campaign to accelerate the process by which we can introduce generic drugs on to the formulary, and that's what we're doing, and that's going to be good for Ontarians."

My colleague Ms Churley raised this again and said, "Why are you giving the Minister of Health the authority to delist drugs from the formulary without having to go and get cabinet approval?" Mr McGuinty again denied that that's what the Liberals are doing and said the following: "All we've done through this particular provision is to enable the minister to fast-track the introduction of generics. That's what this is all about," that there is nothing hidden beyond that. "There is nothing that we're trying to do that is beyond that."

So Ms Churley tried for the third time in the same afternoon, and now told the Premier to actually open the

bill and read it so he might understand what's going on. She said to him, "Turn to page 13 of the bill and look at section 20(1), where it says, under the heading 'Delisting,' 'The Lieutenant Governor in Council or the minister may remove the designation of a drug product as a listed drug product even if none of the conditions prescribed under clause 18(1)(b.1) are breached.'"

She asked that question of the Premier. What did the Premier do? He had no answer. This time he referred it to the Minister of Health. So much for the research in the Premier's office.

But Mr Smitherman said the following, "I'm pleased to confirm for the member that the intent of this section is for the fast-tracking of generics to make sure that Ontarians have prompt access to these drugs and to the benefit of the taxpayers." That's not the question. The question is, why are you giving yourself the authority to delist drugs from the formulary, not to list. Mr Smitherman doesn't have very good research either, because he tells us one more time that "the intent is absolutely clear. It is the fast-tracking of generic drugs for the purpose of making sure that the government of Ontario takes advantage, at the earliest date possible, once the federal government has done their" pricing, "to make sure we've got those cheap drugs available as quickly as possible."

I'm all in favour of the minister having the ability to make sure that generic drugs get on to the formulary as quickly as possible, because the Provincial Auditor in the 2003 report noted that the Ontario government is losing hundreds of thousands of dollars, indeed millions, every year because the process is so slow to get products on to the formulary after a recommendation has been made by the Drug Quality and Therapeutics Committee to add those same drugs to the formulary. In fact, Ontario is losing about \$17 million over a two-year period because of that particular problem.

I'm quite in favour of the ministry's fast-tracking the process, so that once we have a positive recommendation from the DQTC, the minister has the approval to add that drug to the formulary, as happens in other provinces. We had that confirmed at a public hearing about this issue in February this year, when the ministry was before us.

But I can tell you that the Provincial Auditor didn't also say that the minister himself should have the power to delist drugs from the formulary unilaterally, without going to cabinet, as is the current process—just willy-nilly sign a paper so that those drugs are delisted. The auditor didn't say anything about that in his recommendations, nor did the auditor's staff say the same during the public hearings in February, nor did the Ministry of

Health staff say they were planning anything the same when they answered questions about this very issue in the public accounts committee in public hearings in February.

So why, oh why, do we now have a provision in this bill that gives the Minister of Health the unilateral power, without having to go to cabinet, to delist drugs? I think the reason is that after we finish with this budget, which delists important health care services like chiropractic, eye care and physiotherapy, the minister is then going to take the axe to the Ontario drug benefit program and willy-nilly, merrily, start delisting any number of drugs so that Ontarians have to pay for those themselves, even though this very government, before the election, promised they would not make changes and do that to the Ontario drug benefit program.

I think the government should take a serious second look at this very important issue. We have proven through our research what they should have known through theirs, unless they were really trying to hide something, which is what I really think was being done. I think we have now made the point to them, and this government should take a sober second look at what is a very negative provision to the ODB and not—not—allow the Minister of Health to unilaterally delist drugs from the Ontario drug benefit program. Let me give the government a little bit of time to do that: I move adjournment of the debate at this time.

The Deputy Speaker: Ms Churley has moved adjournment of the debate.

Interjection: Ms Churley?

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Ms Martel has moved adjournment of the debate.

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

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1852 to 1922.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour will stand and remain standing.

Take your seats.

All those opposed will stand and remaining standing.

Take your seats.

Deputy Clerk (Ms Deborah Deller): The ayes are 10; the nays are 28.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion defeated. The member for Nickel Belt.

Ms Martel: Let me deal with another issue with respect to the budget that the Liberals need to take a second look at; that is, the very regressive, very unfair premium or health tax that is going to be implemented by this government, ostensibly to pay for health care. It's interesting to note that nowhere in the budget is there a description that there will be a special-purpose account set up to actually ensure that that money does go to health care. We'll wait and see. But this is a horribly regressive new tax, and what's most interesting about it

is that it's a tax which Mr McGuinty himself, before the election, also described as very unfair and regressive.

Here is what he said earlier this year: "Ontario Liberals oppose the return of OHIP premiums because they are a tax hike on working families." Of course, he is absolutely right about that. That's exactly what they are. Two years ago, during the Conservative leadership race, this is what he said when Chris Stockwell proposed OHIP premiums: "Families are already paying for health care with their taxes. Pay more for health care, pay twice for health care, but get less health care—that's the Tory plan. It's certainly not the Liberal plan."

"Stockwell may want to raise taxes by charging families an additional \$1,000 a year for health care. I do not," said Mr McGuinty.

How times have changed after an election. Isn't that interesting? There he was signing that protection pledge, smiling into the cameras, saying, "I'm not going to raise your taxes. I'm particularly not going to raise taxes on health." What does he do after the election? Sock it right to modest- and middle-income families who can least afford another tax.

I've heard Liberals say they didn't have a choice. They certainly did have another choice, and I'm going to get to the other choice after I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Ms Martel has moved adjournment of the House.

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

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1926 to 1956.

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

OK, take your seats.

All those opposed, please stand.

Take your seats, please.

Deputy Clerk: The ayes are 10; the nays are 27.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost. The member for Nickel Belt.

Ms Martel: I said the Liberals had other choices. Let me tell you what those other choices were. They could have cancelled the 35% tax cuts for wealthy Ontarians, which were put in place by the Conservatives for people who are making over \$100,000 and can afford to contribute more. They should have closed the loophole in the employer health tax, which is giving a huge financial benefit to some of the biggest corporations in Ontario. They could have returned to the 1999 corporate income tax rates, which were very competitive with all the US jurisdictions we trade with.

But instead of making those changes, which would have ensured that those wealthy corporations and wealthy Ontarians who can afford to make a greater contribution actually did, this government decided to whack it to modest- and middle-income families. That's what is so upsetting about the budget; that's what is so offensive

about it. The premium itself is completely regressive, and that premium, along with all the other hikes, will put a huge, significant financial burden on Ontario working families.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): I, quite frankly, was a bit disappointed by the presentation made by the member for Nickel Belt, and the reason is, I realize there are some philosophical differences between our party and the New Democratic Party, but I think everyone in this House would agree that we share something in common; that is, over the last eight or nine years we have fought a government that has starved our services, that has starved education and health care. Together, we have joined to oppose them. Together, we went into the last election and spoke about solving the problems facing health care and education.

What I expected tonight was that the member for Nickel Belt would stand up and say, "Good for you, government, that you're going to reduce waiting times for cancer care. Good for you, government, that you're going to provide 36,000 more cardiac procedures. Good for you, government, that you're going to provide 2,340 more joint replacements every year. Good for you, government, that when it comes to issues like a doctor shortage, you're going to invest in 150 new family health centres." But no, all we're hearing is criticism.

2000

The member from Nickel Belt dared to stand up and talk about how we should have taxed the rich. Well, I ask, where was the New Democratic Party when we brought forward legislation to cancel the private school tax credit? They were siding with the Conservatives. They were siding with the Conservatives to reinstate, to keep—

Interjections.

Mr Milloy: Where was the New Democratic Party when we came forward and said, "Let's roll back the proposed corporate tax cuts of the previous government"? They were with the Conservatives, voting in favour of the rich.

We had a plan in this campaign. The plan was to fix our services, education and health care, and this budget has delivered on them.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Questions and comments?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's a pleasure to respond to the insightful comments made by the member from Nickel Belt, because I can compliment her on her passion for public health. She owns that territory, and she did try in her remarks to hold the Premier accountable. I think it's a worthy task; however, for a government that has failed to keep any promise to date, I think her task is in vain. I'm not surprised that she moved time allocation, by any stretch of the imagination.

You have to look around their caucus. There are questions among themselves. This is the single sign of

hope that I've seen, that even among themselves there are some who still have a conscience. It's reassuring.

I look across the row at the member from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, Jim Brownell. He's here tonight. He said he wasn't happy with everything in the budget. Do the right thing tonight. Make a stand tonight and do the right thing. Stand for the principle of public health, not for taxes on health, not for delisting. That's the point that was being made by the member from Nickel Belt. But he's not alone in this. This is encouraging. If nothing else, this is encouraging.

Phil McNeely, the member from Ottawa-Orléans, called the budget brutal. Now, I think that's a fairly polite word permitted here in the House, but he insists that new tax was required to improve—they never said that during the election. This budget is a complete charade of what you promised during the election. That's the disappointment here.

Kim Craiton from Niagara Falls demanded—but you know, he's not alone as well. I think the member from Prince Edward-Hastings—he's not here tonight—is in some trouble because he's contradicted himself. He said this on television, and Frank Klees had the transcript—

The Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired. The member for Durham, I'd appreciate it if you'd watch the clock almost as closely as I do.

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member who just spoke was referring to the attendance of another member, which is not permitted in this House.

The Deputy Speaker: That's a point of order. Thank you. I would remind all members that we're not to point out the absence of other members.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I want to commend the member for accentuating the fact that his colleague was absent from the House.

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): On the same point of order, Mr Speaker: I missed the reference. Which member was he referring to who was not here?

The Deputy Speaker: That's the end of the points of order. The member for Beaches-East York.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): It is indeed an honour for me to comment on my colleague from Nickel Belt. As always, she speaks passionately, she speaks with authority, and she knows of what she speaks.

I also had an opportunity to listen to the member from Kitchener Centre, and although his colleagues gave him a standing ovation, I can only feel sorry for him. I can only feel sorry because he lacks all the history of this place and what happened before. He lacks any clue of what happened when the Liberals sat on this side of the House.

Yes, the Liberals were courageous in those days. At least some of them attacked what was very bad Tory policy. I will agree that they did do that. However, in government you act more like the Tories than the Tories themselves. You bring in legislation that they wouldn't dare bring in. You bring in health premiums that they wouldn't dare bring in. You bring in regressive legis-

lation that they just wouldn't do. You are sticking it to the people that they were afraid to stick it to.

I want to tell you, when you speak, you speak as if you are a True Believer. It takes me back to my university days, an excellent little book by Eric Hoffer on the True Believer. That is a person who, in spite of all the facts, in spite of everything that is there, has an ideology that will not let him or her actually see it. I want to tell you, you fit that mould perfectly. I recommend the book to you. I think you should read it. If you want to know how you speak, you speak as a True Believer.

What we need to do here is get on with the real debate. The real debate is what is happening to the people of Ontario. The real debate in part is—and I would agree with you that there are good things in the budget—where you're getting the money to pay for it. The real thing is where you're getting the money to pay for it. The way you're getting the money to pay for it is regressive and wrong. That is why we in the New Democratic Party will not support you on this budget. At least half of what you are doing is wrong.

Mrs Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre): It's a pleasure to stand in support of the budget. I find it absolutely fascinating that the member from Nickel Belt will stand with such outrageousness on the issue of the budget, when that particular party added so significantly to the deficit of this province by hundreds of millions of dollars, and left a legacy from the social contract that we are all still reeling from.

Then I look to the other side, to the party that took \$2 billion out of education and, to quote Justice Archie Campbell, put in place "the greatest draconian piece of legislation since the War Measures Act that he had ever seen." That was Bill 169. So this incredible indignation across the way is really a lot of theatrics going on, instead of dealing with the substantive issues of the fact that this province has a crushing deficit.

Responsible government deals with the issues at hand and doesn't make easy decisions. They make difficult decisions, given the times that they live within. They make decisions that have sustainability and will leave a legacy for the children of this province that won't continue to contribute to that outstanding deficit that was left by the two previous governments.

I think it's time that people sit back and read the budget, not just listen to the rhetoric that's going on across. They will recognize that it will make a significant difference in the lives of all of us. You're right that it isn't easy to make difficult decisions, but leadership never is easy if it's leadership that's effective.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Nickel Belt has two minutes to reply.

Ms Martel: Let me say to all Liberals, no one believes any promises that you make any more, either in the election or in the budget, because your track record is so pathetic. You were the group that broke the promise of keeping the hydro cap in place. You were the group that broke the promise to stop the development of 6,000 houses on the Oak Ridges moraine. You're the group that

broke the promise to reduce auto insurance by 20%. You're the group that broke the promise to autistic kids, and you still discriminate against them when they turn age six.

You're the group that broke the most important election promise. There was Dalton McGuinty smiling into the camera, signing that paper, saying, "I won't raise taxes." Here we are with this budget. This budget is putting it to modest- and low-income families on any number of levels: with the new health tax, with the increase in hydro that comes in the budget, with the increase in sin taxes, and the list goes on and on.

So no one believes the promises you made in the election and no one believes the promises that you make in the budget now. You have a serious, serious credibility gap, folks. Now, the Liberals could have made another choice. I mentioned those choices.

2010

Let me deal with the premium in particular. Here's how pathetic the premium is. An individual who makes \$26,000 a year is going to pay 1.2% of their taxable income, while someone making \$150,000 is only going to be paying 1.5% of their income against the new tax. That's a choice you made. But I think the choice that's the clearest for me, to clearly show whose side you're on, is the choice where you give a \$1-billion capital tax exemption to the banks while you stick it to modest- and middle-income Ontarians. That's your choice. You live with it, folks.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): Mr Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member from Don Valley West.

I'm delighted to be taking part in this debate tonight. The 2004 budget, as presented, will determine the future of our province, the future of our children, the future of our young families. We will invest in health care; we will invest in education; we will invest in municipal infrastructure.

We will make sure that those who have given us the quality of life we have today, those who have been making thousands of sacrifices, are recognized in our budget: our seniors. We will increase the property tax credit for seniors with low and moderate incomes. We will restore long-term-care standards. We will add 2,000 new long-term-care staff in nursing homes, including 600 nurses. We will purchase 12,000 lift beds for long-term-care residents. We will provide home care for an additional 95,700 Ontarians by 2007-08. The Tories had frozen home care visits.

Unlike the previous government, we have consulted the people of Ontario. Yes, our government has held more than 50 consultations province-wide. The message was clear. The consensus was that the government will tackle the deficit over the course of its mandate, rather than the slash-and-burn approach of the Conservatives. This is exactly what we are doing: We are tackling this Tory deficit while investing in what Ontarians consider to be priorities for them. We could have gone the same

way as the Tories when they took over the NDP fiasco period between 1990 and 1995, but we have decided not to proceed with health cuts, education cuts and downloading.

Remember what the Tories did to the municipalities in the downloading? They transferred road services to the municipalities, and today we just can't afford to do the upkeep. They transferred 75% of the agriculture property tax to the municipalities. In the past, this was fully paid by the government. They transferred ambulance services to the municipalities. In the past, it used to be 100% paid by the province. They transferred the property tax assessment offices, which today is costing an average of \$75 per household. They transferred social housing to the municipalities. Again and again, this is costing hundreds of millions of dollars to the municipalities.

In the rural sector, they transferred the responsibility for the inspection of septic sewage treatment plants that used to be handled fully by the province. When they transferred 75% of the credit that farmers used to get—and the municipalities at least were getting 100% of that property tax—the municipalities had to reduce that property tax by 75%. But we did better. We said to the farmers that we would cancel the land transfer tax as of March 28, 2003, retroactively. We will have \$20 million available for nutrient management. You people failed to do anything good for the farmers.

The municipalities will benefit from \$900 million for infrastructure. That was left to the opposition. Just in my own riding itself, we had a shortfall of \$23 million with this downloading.

Mr Speaker, I will give my colleague a chance to take over from this point.

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I'm going to share the last bit of my time with the member from Mississauga West.

I just want to be clear. I want to go on the record, as a new member in this House, as to why I'm supporting this budget and what I ran on. I was quite familiar with the Legislature as a parent activist and as a school trustee. I was here quite a bit. I got to know a lot of the members on the floor. I was up there in the gallery watching what was going on here, and I was back in my community organizing parents, working with the community to oppose the policies of the previous regime. It was a full-time job, because there was a lot to oppose, let me tell you.

I ran because we must, in this province, turn around the destruction and the devastation that's been done to our public institutions. We must do that. So when I went to the door in the 17 months that I was campaigning up to the election, I talked to people and committed to them that I would work to restore public education, to invest in public health, to expand home care, to deal with cities differently and to change the agenda around public health and public transit. That's exactly what this budget does. This budget turns around the way government deals with public infrastructure and public services in this province. That's why I ran. I ran in order to do that.

The opposition wants to say now that there are members in the caucus who aren't happy with particular parts of the budget. They're dealing in wedge politics. They're trying to divide us from each other. I can tell you that there is an enormous common ground among the members of our caucus. We are absolutely committed to turning around the direction of this province. That's what this budget will do.

Interjection.

Ms Wynne: The last thing I want to say is that there's an issue—that's a prop—on style here. When I was a parent in north Toronto, my newly elected Conservative member said that he didn't like going to public meetings because he didn't like it when people yelled at him. So we decided, as a group of parents, as part of People for Education's first Visit Your MPP Day, to visit his office, and we took signs. There were about four moms. We took signs with the names of our kids' schools, the number of kids in the schools and the services they were losing. We stood outside his door and asked for an interview with him, and he locked the door. He wouldn't open the door. He wouldn't even speak to us. His EA and his staffers were hiding behind the door because he didn't have the courage to come out and speak to us.

That's why I ran, because we are different. We are opening the doors, we are talking to people, we are looking our constituents in the eye and we're saying, "This is why I'm doing it, because we need more revenue in this province. If we don't have revenue, we can't change the damage that's been done. We can't restore this province." That's why I ran. That's why I'm supporting this budget, and I am so looking forward to the changes that we're going to make, because they are the best thing for the citizens of this province.

2020

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): The budget debate allows me to introduce Peel Region Science Fair gold medallists and Canada Wide Science Fair finalists Tamryn and Tenneille Loo and David Castelino, who is here with his mother, Margaret. They are from Mississauga. We welcome them. They've just returned from the Canada Wide Science Fair in Newfoundland.

The Deputy Speaker: We welcome you. We needed that.

Questions or comments?

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'd like to respond to a couple of things said by the member from Don Valley West and Jean-Marc Lalonde from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell.

First of all, I think the member from Don Valley West should get used to working with her federal counterpart. I think David Turnbull will make an excellent MP and I look forward to working with him. He will enjoy working with you.

I have to talk to Mr Lalonde. He smashed the previous government for what he calls downloading and what we call local services realignment. But with local services realignment, there are two points I think we should make clear. Whatever we did wrong with local services realign-

ment, or downloading, you have the power to change it. Minister Gerretsen can change it with the stroke of a pen. He can bring in legislation. So go ahead and do it. Change it back if it's so bad.

Second of all, every municipality that had any kind of downloading cost received the CRF money, and you're trying to cancel that money. That's what we're hearing across the province, from AMO and everybody else. That is a fact of life. The CRF money—the community reinvestment fund is what it's called. All the municipalities in my riding received—

Interjections.

Mr Dunlop: It's hard to talk here, Mr Speaker. These people are very noisy.

The fact of the matter is, the community reinvestment fund has been paid to those communities since the beginning of the local services realignment exercise. I understand now that this government, the new government, is trying to download that and eliminate it altogether.

Mr Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity and thank you.

Mr Kormos: Earlier today I told you about 83-year-old Margaret Boychuk, who has lived for 53 years down on the Kingsway in south Welland, in the area formerly known as Dain City. Margaret Boychuk is a widow who raised her family there and paid taxes all of her life. She's going blind now—she has macular degeneration—and the only treatment she can get is the Visudyne treatment. Mrs Boychuk isn't a wealthy woman. She's a hard-working woman and, like so many hard-working Canadians who are 83 years old, she's not a wealthy woman. She's even less prosperous than she would be otherwise because gas and electricity prices keep increasing and property taxes keep increasing, and she's going to go blind.

The problem is that she thought her Visudyne treatment was going to be covered by OHIP. Well, it isn't. The treatment she received on April 28 cost her \$2,750, and she may need as many as five more treatments if she's going to recover and maintain that sight. She's legally blind now and her only chance of restoring any amount of sight is with Visudyne treatment. When she heard this budget and the delisting of services, the privatization of health services, she knew the unlikelihood of her ever having OHIP coverage so that for the final five years, maybe a decade if we're lucky, she could maintain her sight and continue to work in her garden, till the earth and grow the little bit of vegetables and flowers that she took pride in. She was hoping this government had enough of a commitment to public health care to fund her Visudyne treatment. Well, it's clear this government doesn't. This government has abandoned Mrs Boychuk. This government has abandoned other people like her. This government has abandoned people who need chiropractic services, physiotherapy services and optometrists. This government is headed down the path of privatization of health care. Shame on them.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I can't wait for October 4, 2007, to fight the next election on this budget

that the Liberal government has brought down today. I have absolutely no problem going to the people and showing them the responsibility of this government versus the previous administration's.

Interjection.

Mr Sergio: You have a short memory. Who introduced copayments? The former government. Who introduced \$100 for people making \$16,000? The previous government. We are doing what is responsible. Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals say that, and we are doing exactly that; just some of the things that are important to the people of Ontario.

Let me tell the people across the floor, they are not telling what the people of Ontario are getting from the McGuinty government and the McGuinty budget—just some of the people. And just in case Mr Kormos forgets, let us remind him that we are looking after the people who need the most care. This is what we said, and we will do exactly that. For example, 167,000 Ontarians cannot find primary care because there are not enough doctors in Ontario. We will provide that assistance. Thirty-seven per cent won't have to pay anything with respect to health care premiums. There will be 4,000 new teachers. Why? Because they were decimated by the government. For the first time, our seniors will be enjoying some respite from any government, and they are getting it from the McGuinty Liberal government.

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): I really find it amazing, particularly for the member for Don Valley West to talk about a former colleague of mine, David Turnbull, who is now running in the federal election in the same area. She talks about his performance when he was in the Legislature and about her canvassing from door to door across her riding. But there's a great difference between when she was canvassing and talking to the people at the door and what David Turnbull did when he canvassed in his riding.

Ms Wynne: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I was referring to a member. It was not the member to whom this member is referring.

The Deputy Speaker: Maybe we could clear that up later.

Mr Sterling: It doesn't matter which Conservative member or which Liberal member it was, there's a major difference between what happened. When our candidates went to the doors during the provincial election, we told people what we were going to do. We put forward a program, and after the election we did what we promised before the election.

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): How many hospitals did you close?

Mr Sterling: Actually we built 21 hospitals while we were there in the last eight years. We did what we said we would do after the election. That's why the electorate is upset with the provincial Liberals, because you got here under false pretences. They will not forget that in this federal election and they won't forget that in the next provincial election.

I say to the other member, Mr Sergio, let's have an election now. Let's have a referendum now. Let's not

wait for the next election in October 2007; let's have it right now.

2030

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell has two minutes.

Mr Lalonde: I'd like to thank my colleague from Don Valley West, and also my colleague from York West. But for the other three, I would highly recommend that they take a French copy so they will clearly understand what the contents of this budget are, because we have the best budget for seniors that we've had in many decades. Also, I think if those three members would take the time and go to the office of my Don Valley West colleague, she would be in a real position to teach them how to read the budget properly. Then they would probably understand properly.

The member for Simcoe North referred to how we haven't done much for the people of Ontario. Let me tell you, they are the ones who cancelled the 100% part of public health that the government of Ontario was paying toward the municipalities. You transferred 50% of that responsibility. We did better than that. We said we will charge only 25% instead of 50%, but it used to be fully paid by the provincial government.

What we are debating today is a budget that was left to us with a large deficit. When we took over, we never expected we would be facing what we are facing today: a deficit of over \$5.6 billion, plus an accumulated debt of \$139 billion.

The Deputy Speaker: I wish we'd all just quiet down a little. I can't hear the noise from Tampa Bay. Further debate?

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): It's a pleasure to rise today to speak on the budget motion. I can't believe that we have some similar constituents. I can't believe that the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell has the same seniors, because I haven't been hearing that they're happy. I'm hearing that they're more like those from Niagara Centre, whose member was telling a story about a senior who is not going to be able to stay in her home any more. The people in my riding are angry, especially about the delisting of chiropractics, physiotherapy and optometry services and the new health care premium.

Mr O'Toole: The tax. It's a health tax, not a premium. It's a tax. This "premium" language is baloney.

Ms Scott: It's a tax. It's another blow to the seniors, Jean-Marc. I just can't believe that the seniors are happy. They've already increased the rate of hydro and taken the senior's tax credit away. These are things that you've done in your budget.

People in small rural communities struggle to make ends meet. They don't have the family doctors and access to services that people in the urban areas take for granted. I'm concerned to read in the newspaper your government's plans surrounding the optometry services. Let's talk about that for a minute. They're going to need a physician's referral. Most of the people in my area, a large amount of them, don't have access to family

doctors. That's a little bit of an urban bias when you say, "It's OK, they can go to their doctor and get a prescription to visit the optometrist." Maybe the Minister of Health needs to visit some more underserved areas in the province to really understand the hardship that's going on.

I've received calls and letters from constituents angry at the budget announcement of increased fees and the delisting of services, like I said before. And they should be angry. Like the third party has said, the increased burden on low-income and middle-income earners has a real impact on the services that are delivered to them. This is not good health care. These are preventive measures taken away. It will cost more for health care at the end of day. This is not good planning. Have they thought out the long-term effects this will have on the health care system, the money we'll have to spend on it?

Over the last 10 years when the previous government was in, we reduced the debt by \$5 billion, but over the next few years, you're looking at increasing the debt up to \$12 billion. The budget will raise an additional \$9.7 billion in taxes in one form or another, whether they're called user fees, taxes or the cancellation of the previous tax credits. We're going to see \$1.6 billion in this fiscal year raised in a new health care tax and that will net the government \$2 billion in succeeding fiscal years. We're going to see a \$1.1-billion increase in personal income tax. There's already that Enron-style game going on with that \$3.9-billion hydro tax that will be collected over the next 20 years, but it's all in this fiscal year's books. We're going to see a \$200-million increase in tobacco taxes on wine, spirits and beer.

"No, I will not raise your taxes." There are already 50 tax increases in this budget. Let's also remember the \$9.7 billion on top of the \$4.3 billion that was introduced by the government on January 1 this year. Families, small businesses and farmers can only absorb so much in the way of taxation before they start to make decisions that are going to negatively affect all of us and the economy of our towns and our cities.

Because of this increase in taxation levels, families will put off buying new homes. This will create job losses in the construction industry. They'll be putting off buying new cars. What does this mean for the people in my communities who make their living selling cars? I stopped into a car dealership. They've sold two cars since the budget was announced. It's a new car dealership. He's looking at laying off people. This budget is not going to make life better for Ontarians. He's going to be out of work and out of business.

I'm going to tell you about a constituent of mine, Brian Wood. His life's going to be a lot more difficult. He lives in St Paul's House, which is a group home for disabled adults. He's 90% blind, and the delisting of ophthalmology services and physiotherapy services is going to be a financial hardship on him.

There are countless other individual stories of hardship that I can relate to. I have to think that every member is getting these phone calls.

Interjections.

Ms Scott: Optometrists. I'm sorry. No problem.

Interjection: Let her talk.

Mr O'Toole: They're not listening to you.

Ms Scott: That's okay. That's all right. I hope that they think, before they stand in their places and vote on this budget, about the disruptive impact it's going to have on all their constituents.

I want to address the issue of the new health tax—because it is a tax, and you're trying to portray it as a premium. But it's going to be taken off the people's paycheques as part of their personal income tax payments. It's not a separate line that shows their health premium deductions. It's going to be simply lumped in as part of their income tax deductions. The premiums themselves, which are supposed to be dedicated to providing enhanced health care services, are going to be lumped in to the general revenues of the province. So it remains to be seen whether they're going to be used for health care at all. We'll all be waiting to see that.

As the members of the third party have taken great pains to point out to the government members opposite, the health care premium's going to hit working families the hardest. An individual making \$26,000 a year will have to pay 1.2% of their taxable income, while someone with an income of \$45,000 will have to pay 1% of their income, while people making large salaries will have to pay a much smaller portion of their income.

Interjection: Exactly.

Ms Scott: Absolutely. Many of the people in my riding earn modest incomes. In Haliburton county alone, the average household income is \$44,991. That is the lowest of almost every other part of the province. It's lower than the Premier's part of the province. Do you want to know what the average income is in Ottawa-Carleton? It's \$80,526. In York region, the Minister of Finance's riding, the average household income is \$98,000. It's much harder for the people in my riding to absorb these service cuts and tax increases than it will be for the people in the Premier's riding or the Minister of Finance's riding, who make that average income.

No matter how many times and how you try to spin this budget, the hard-working families who believed your promises and voted for you are the ones who are paying the price. They did not know that the promises in the heat of an election campaign by the Liberals are not to be trusted. They believed you when you said you would not raise their taxes. They believed you when you signed the taxpayers' protection pledge. They didn't expect that your promises would amount to a tax grab aimed directly at them and their families.

Many of the people in my riding are farmers and have already been forced to deal with the BSE crisis. It's had serious impact on their ability to make a living, and many of them are being forced to make sacrifices just to remain farming. In the past few months, they've had to pay increased amounts for hydro service, and this budget does nothing to make their lives any easier. The only agriculture announcements in the budget were re-

announcements of items that the government earlier pledged money to. If you look more closely—

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): There's \$120 million.

Ms Scott: I'm going to get to that, Steve. You'll notice that the overall operating dollars for the Ministry of Agriculture and Food was reduced to \$128 million. That's a 20% reduction. The nutrient management plan—\$20 million doesn't translate into money flowing this year.

So on behalf of the farmers in my riding, I'm moving adjournment of debate of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Ms Scott has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

2040

Ms Scott: No; debate.

The Deputy Speaker: Excuse me? No. Let's clear it: Was it debate? Ms Scott has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it. Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2040 to 2110.

The Deputy Speaker: Ms Scott has moved adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour, please stand and remain standing. Take your seats, please.

All those opposed will please stand.

Deputy Clerk: The ayes are 8; the nays are 27.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost. The member for Haliburton-Victoria-Brock has the floor.

Ms Scott: Getting back to the budget of broken promises and how it affects the people in my riding, the day after the budget, there was actually an elderly lady who phoned into the office, crying. She didn't think she'd be able to stay in her own house because of the effects the budget would have on her. It's a sad thing to happen.

Going through the streets of Lindsay, the barber was so angry, he almost shaved someone's head too close. He was. It is a very true story. It's Spencer's barbershop on Main Street in Lindsay. It's where Leslie Frost used to go to get the pulse of Ontario, what was happening. There was anger everywhere. People were coming out and saying, "They broke their promises. They didn't do what they said they were going to do. No." How can they stay in their own homes? Increases in taxes 50 times—broken promises. They said, "But Dalton McGuinty signed the taxpayers' pledge."

My colleague Frank Klees introduced a bill earlier this week entitled the Taxpayer Protection Affirmation Act, 2004, Bill 85. I encourage all members in the House to support this bill, because I think it's important. Everyone agreed to protect the rights of the taxpayers of Ontario. They should be able to expect fiscal prudence and accountability to them. That's what the Premier promised

during the election. He said, "We're not going to raise your taxes." So he should do what he said in the election. He said he'd have a referendum before he'd raise taxes, and that's what the people want.

Some 230 promises were made in the last election, yet this budget has charted a new course and we'll see tax increases more than 20 times over the next year, and the provincial debt is going to rise by \$2 billion by 2007. Please, listen to the people of Ontario and make changes in the budget that's coming.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I'm very pleased to be able to respond to the comments by the member from Haliburton-Victoria-Brock. I need to say that it's really quite interesting, as someone fairly new to this chamber, to hear members of the official opposition bringing forward arguments that I actually used as a New Democrat during my election campaign not too long ago. In fact, all the comments that were raised by the member are exactly the kinds of comments I was raising with the residents of Hamilton East even prior to the budget being tabled. I can tell you, at that time, prior to this budget, people were concerned about the broken promises of this government.

It's not surprising, then, to me that the budget didn't come down until five days after we had the by-election in Hamilton East, which really speaks to a number of issues, including the arrogance of this government to not allow the people of Hamilton East to have a voice or a vote on the budget. And you know why. They couldn't have that voice or vote because this government was afraid to put the budget to the people. This government was afraid to have the people vote on this budget. That is why this budget was tabled five days after the by-election took place.

All I can say is that the positive thing, I guess, from the perspective of the government, is that they didn't have a chance to do that. Therefore, 63% of the vote was achieved as opposed to probably 95%, had the budget been tabled prior to the by-election date.

It's because of the broken promises that have been not only ongoing since the day this party took government, but are also reflected in that budget. In fact, not even broken promises, but the weak leadership and the inability of this government to speak to the actual working people of this province was so clear. It's frightening, from my perspective, to see the regressive nature of this budget. I really want to say that the member who spoke to this prior to me was right on the money: It's about broken promises, weak leadership and lack of ability to speak to the people.

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I was delighted to listen very carefully to the member from Victoria-Haliburton-Brock. Just to set the record straight, I remember not too long ago the former mayor of Lindsay, Ontario, my good friend Art Truax, coming into my office and saying, "You know, Jeff, if you're successful on October 2, when are you going to start uploading some of the costs that were downloaded to us by our

good friend Al Leach, when he brought in his famous omnibus bill a few months after the Tories were elected in 1995?" I remember Mr Truax telling me, "In the good old days, public health care used to be funded on an 80-20 basis; 80% by the provincial government, 20% by the municipality."

One of the things that's going to occur in this budget is that we're finally starting the uploading process in this province, to give a better balance between municipalities and the provincial government and to allow municipalities to finally put their dollars where they see their priorities, not the priorities that were established by that downloading exercise by the former Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Al Leach.

The other thing that's interesting—and I like my friend the member from Victoria-Haliburton-Brock. She invoked the memory of former Premier, Les Frost. Well, I would recommend that the member read his biography that was written by Roger Graham, a professor from Queen's University. What Mr Frost thought, it was said, was that the obligation of the province was to look after people who were disadvantaged and disabled. That government slashed welfare rates by 21% and put people out in the streets. The streets of Peterborough, that's where the people were. Now they pretend to be Mother Teresa over there. That act wears thin, because the people of Ontario know their record.

Mr Dunlop: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I just wanted to point out that the member from Victoria-Haliburton-Brock is a nurse. She may not be Mother Teresa, but she has a very caring place in her heart for the general public. She's worked at the hospital in Lindsay and all of those areas. I think it's important that we acknowledge that and that everyone knows she is a caring nurse.

The Deputy Speaker: The point of order should be that she's from Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, not Victoria-Haliburton-Brock.

Mr Dunlop: I'll correct myself on that. I apologize for that.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Durham has two minutes.

Mr O'Toole: In the interests of saving time, I want to acknowledge the valid contribution by the member from Haliburton-Victoria-Brock. As our party whip has said, she is a professional nurse. I can tell you, she speaks with knowledge and passion on a topic that is the defeat of this government. What she tried to bring to the debate was something that even members of their own caucus have said. In fact, their own party whip, Dave Levac, was quoted in the Brantford Expositor on May 29, after the budget. He said, "The irony is that I spoke to them just after returning from my regular appointments, Levac chuckled..." What he said here is, "The Liberal whip told chiropractors he felt their pain, and suggested that McGuinty should revisit the decision to slash these services." So there's their whip.

We have another minister here tonight, Maria Bountroggianni from Hamilton Mountain. What did she say? "I know how disappointed they are. They're defeated. I can

see their tail between their legs. You can see it. It's the drooping shoulders. It's the symbolism of it all." She said she "will be fighting to lower the premiums."

Minister, I say to you in all reason—

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: No, it's actually from the Hamilton Spectator of May 26, 2004.

As a minister who was at the cabinet table that decided to delist services—optometry, chiropractic, physiotherapy—that are going to affect the most vulnerable in our society, the frail elderly who are going to be denied services—it's the thin edge-of-the-wedge. step of a deliberate scheme, a plan, to delist services.

2120

On top of that, they're imposing a fine, or a tax, if you will—a premium. Laurie Scott, the member from Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, is the only one who has brought the passion and reason right down to the Ross Memorial Hospital, where she practised as a nurse. She cares about health, and it's clear that Dalton McGuinty doesn't. The people of Ontario—

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

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I want to commend the member from Haliburton-Victoria-Brock for her comments. It's been said a couple of times tonight that she brings a particular perspective to this debate as a person who is a practitioner in the health care system, and I think that's important to note.

There's an issue called leadership. The Liberals, in this particular debate, are trying to tell us it takes leadership; it takes leadership for them to whack people with a great big tax increase, and that's a question of leadership. But let's put this into perspective. Before the election, Dalton McGuinty went out and signed a pledge with the taxpayers' federation. In that pledge, he said, "We are not going to raise taxes"; signed, Dalton McGuinty.

Mr O'Toole: You can't believe them.

Mr Bisson: Let me finish. I want to show you the leadership that this takes. On the one hand we have this leadership that signed the taxpayers' protection pledge. Then he went out to another group of people and said, "I'll promise you everything. You want health care? I'll give you health care. You want something? I'll give you something. I'll promise absolutely everything." Then they get elected and spin the wheel and they go, "Which promise are we going to break?" because they've got to break one.

Mr O'Toole: How about all of them?

Mr Bisson: That's my point, where I'm going. It's a question of which type of promise they're going to break. On the one hand they said, "We're not going to raise taxes"; on the other hand they said, "We're going to promise the world." They spun the wheel and it landed on everything. That's the thing that's really interesting about this.

They say leadership. They didn't pick one side of the equation or the other; they picked both at the same time. They're not delivering on the most fundamental of

promises that they made to people when it comes to services, and then they break the promise they made to taxpayers that they wouldn't raise taxes. I say leadership; that takes chutzpah. That's not leadership; that's Liberals doing what they always do, and that is saying one thing to voters during the period of an election and doing quite differently when they get elected.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for, um, Haliburton-Victoria-Brock has two minutes to reply.

Ms Scott: I just want to warn the people in the Legislature that the riding name will be changing again soon, so don't get too used to saying it in the proper order.

Hon Mr Caplan: What's the new name?

Ms Scott: Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. That's going to be the new name.

Hon Mr Caplan: That's a little shorter.

Ms Scott: Yes; a little shorter for everyone.

I want to thank the member for Hamilton East, the new member, and welcome her to the Legislature. She's certainly a welcome addition. I appreciate your being here. She certainly hit on the right topic of broken promises, because that is the theme of what's happened in this budget.

The member from Peterborough mentioned Leslie Frost, and I did mention that barbershop intentionally, because Leslie Frost would always go there to get the pulse of Ontario. That is a very true story I told you about the anger in the barbershop toward this budget. The one million jobs created by the previous government is something to be proud of, not to be ashamed of, definitely.

To the member for Durham and the point of order from the member for Simcoe North, back on health care: As a practitioner, I can't reinforce enough the fact that I appreciate what the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has done today for full-time nurses. We certainly need more full-time nurses. They are the front line. We're going to be watching closely, though, because I do not want that to be another broken promise. I want 8,000 more nurses, so I'm going to watch closely for those 8,000 nurses.

I'd like to thank the member from Timmins-James Bay for his comments. It does take leadership to make changes in government. With respect, I know we've talked a lot about health care and the delisting of services, but those are very passionate things; we need to make sure people have access to care. Those things are going to affect people greatly.

Some other impacts of the 2004 Liberal budget: the \$1.6-billion personal income tax hike for the health care premiums—I hope that means better health care service; and the \$3.9-billion electricity rate hike, increases in taxes, beer, wine and tobacco—are you going to make me stop? Delisting of—

The Deputy Speaker: I think the member's time has expired.

It being 9:30 of the clock, this House is adjourned until Monday, June 7, at 1:30 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 2125.

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Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Pupatello, Hon / L'hon Sandra (L) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Sault Ste Marie	Oraziotti, David (L)	Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Hon / L'hon Dwight (L) Minister of Energy, Chair of Cabinet, Government House Leader / ministre de l'Énergie, président du Conseil des ministres, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Duguid, Brad (L)	York Centre / York-Centre	Kwinter, Hon / L'hon Monte (L) Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Scarborough East / Scarborough-Est	Chambers, Hon / L'hon Mary Anne V. (L) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités	York North / York-Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Hon / L'hon Joseph (L) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Hon / L'hon Gerry (L) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement	York West / York-Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Hon / L'hon Alvin (L) Speaker / Président		
Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)		
Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
St Catharines	Bradley, Hon / L'hon James J. (L) Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs		
St Paul's	Bryant, Hon / L'hon Michael (L) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique		

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

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

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