



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

First Session, 38th Parliament

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Première session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 12 October 2004

Mardi 12 octobre 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 12 October 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 12 octobre 2004

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

UNEMPLOYMENT

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I rise to strongly urge the Ontario government to intervene in all possible ways to stop the erosion of jobs and to provide immediate assistance to the town of Collingwood and to the employees of Nacan starch products, Backyard Products, Blue Mountain Pottery and Keller Electric. With the announcement of the closure of these plants, nearly 500 local residents will be put out of work two months before Christmas.

The town has been working with the Ministries of Agriculture and Food and Economic Development and Trade to secure an ethanol plant for the Nacan site and to find new business opportunities that help secure Collingwood's place in the global economy, but last week's announcement that Backyard Products has closed its doors hasn't helped. Some 160 full-time employees, along with 200 seasonal employees, have been laid off.

The government needs to assist the town to put a sustainable economic strategy in place to attract new businesses and jobs; provide all assistance necessary to laid-off workers and their families, with particular attention to older workers who may have difficulty with finding new jobs or training opportunities; immediately give a share of the provincial gas tax to municipalities like Collingwood so the town can afford the infrastructure and services needed to attract new industry; and put in place a workforce labour adjustment program for the laid-off employees at Backyard Products.

I want to thank Mayor Terry Geddes and council, Catherine Durrant, and the economic development staff for their diligent efforts in promoting Collingwood as one of the best places to live, work and raise a family. In spite of the 500 jobs lost in recent times, Collingwood remains an excellent place to do business, and any businesses wishing to locate there can call 1-888-265-9663.

LIBERAL CAMPAIGN PROMISES

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Here we are on the first day of the new legislative session, and it looks like another session of Liberal excuses and broken

promises. In the last year, Ontarians have learned the hard way that when it comes to weak leadership and renegeing on promises, Dalton McGuinty takes the cake.

Dalton has been breaking promises almost since the first day on the job: the Oak Ridges moraine, Highway 407 tolls, private hospitals, the hydro rate cap, keeping hydro public, lower auto insurance rates, treatment for autistic kids, health delistings, and the unfair, regressive health tax. After one year of Dalton, it is clear: McGuinty's election promise book is nothing but a fictionary of broken promises, and ordinary Ontarians are worse off. They aren't seeing the better health care and education the Liberals promised, and they have less money in their wallets and purses.

That is where Howard Hampton and the New Democrats come in. You can count on us to fight for ordinary people on the issues that matter most: health care, education, the environment, and fair taxes for everyone. We'll provide the strong, effective opposition Ontarians have come to expect which the Liberals promised, and we'll make sure that the Liberals start delivering results. No more excuses, and no more broken promises.

OPP AWARDS

Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I'm happy to rise today to speak about an extraordinary awards ceremony that took place on October 6 in north Glengarry, honouring the citizens of two great eastern Ontario ridings: my own riding of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh and the riding of my neighbour, Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde, Glengarry-Prescott-Russell.

Let me also take the opportunity to congratulate Mr Lalonde on his new duties as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation.

The annual Ontario Provincial Police awards ceremony celebrates dedication, acts of bravery and community service—three great pillars of our society. Fourteen officers were honoured for 20 to 30 years of service, including Constable Paul Deveau, who was honoured for 40 years in law enforcement. Craig Smith from St Andrews West, Shelley Vaillancourt from Cornwall, and Constable John Hatch from the OPP were all presented with awards for their community service.

Two special award recipients were local residents who were awarded commissioner citations for risking their lives to save others. Mr Richard Arcand from Hawkesbury selflessly saved three neighbours after their house caught fire in February 2003. The second recipient, Mr

Charles Carriere from Moose Creek, saved a woman from her burning car on the 401 near Kingston after witnessing the woman's car lose control and hit a tree.

All the award recipients at the OPP annual awards ceremony are exemplary examples of community service, selflessness and pillars of the law enforcement community. I commend them all for their community service, and I know that all Ontarians are proud of their efforts.

LESLIE M. FROST CENTRE

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): This past summer, while the Legislature was not sitting, the Liberal government made a decision to close one of the most valued outdoor centres in the province.

The Leslie M. Frost Centre has provided the surrounding community, and indeed the province, with irreplaceable education and stewardship programs for decades. The Frost Centre was closed with one week's notice. I was astonished that a government that purports to care about the environment and education would move so quickly to close the Frost Centre with no public consultation and no concern for its employees or the public it serves, including the 5,000 children who were scheduled for programs at the Frost Centre this year.

Over the past several months, I have received nearly 15,000 names on petitions and countless letters and calls from concerned constituents. I am sure that many members on both sides of the aisle have heard from their constituents as well. Later today, I'm going to start tabling some of those petitions.

It's not just individuals who are very concerned about the Frost closure. A group of concerned Ontarians, Perma-Frost, presented a letter to the Premier after the closure. Over 60 groups and individuals signed it. Educators, environmentalists, unions and businesses all joined together, calling upon Dalton McGuinty to reconsider.

Later this week will be the first meeting of the local working group that was formed as a result of the pressure brought to bear in the wake of this government's short-sighted, arrogant and rash decision. I am grateful to the government for finally realizing that they needed to act, but I'm concerned about the fact that, since the closure, the decommissioning of the Frost Centre's assets has continued. No matter what the working group concludes, their jobs will be harder, because it will have to rebuild many programs from scratch.

I wish the working group well, and I know that they will listen to the voices of the people who have benefited and developed a strong attachment to the Frost Centre over the years. I hope the government provides the working group with the resources they need to do their job well.

AGRICULTURE 101

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): Last spring, my colleague the member for Peterborough tabled a

resolution that all members spend a day at the farm each year. This resolution led me to issue a challenge to my local Perth County Federation of Agriculture. Working together, we were able, in August, to welcome my urban caucus colleagues from both the GTA and southwest Ontario to Perth-Middlesex.

The purpose of this day was to give members the opportunity to experience first-hand the daily lives of my agricultural constituents. The day was a family affair. Agriculture is a family business in Ontario, and so it was important to me that we made the invitation open to spouses, children, parents and grandparents. All were welcome.

The day offered tours of three local facilities: a dairy, a pork, and an egg-laying operation. Each MPP family was partnered up for the day with a local family to allow one-on-one discussions of the challenges that face the agricultural industry.

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I would like to take this opportunity to thank Tim Shute, Paul Nairn and Burnell Kuepfer of the Perth County Federation of Agriculture for jointly hosting our inaugural Agriculture 101 event. Special thanks also go out to the commodity groups; the Best Little Pork Shoppe; the West, Anderson and Groenestege host families; and the many buddy families for their warm hospitality.

Importantly, I would like to thank my colleagues and their families for taking time out of their busy schedules to visit my riding and get a first-hand look at the unique issues facing our rural communities. The day was a complete success. Finally, I want to thank my colleague the member for Don Valley West for agreeing to co-host next year's event.

LIBERAL CAMPAIGN PROMISES

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): One year ago, this government came to power with a commitment to implement 231 promises, many of which they knew full well they could not keep or afford. Not only have they broken about 37 of these promises, they have tried to hide the true cost of these promises for a year. In doing so, they have betrayed the trust of the people in Ontario.

Let's take a quick look at a few of the Liberal broken promises.

The punitive and regressive health tax was implemented despite a public pledge by the Premier during the election campaign to not raise taxes. Not only did they introduce this health tax, but they are also making Ontarians pay more for less by delisting eye exams, physiotherapy and chiropractic services. This breaks their promise to increase access to care.

By underfunding hospitals, the Liberal government is now on track to break another promise of reducing wait times. Ontario hospitals are over \$600 million short and they will soon have to make the difficult decision of determining what services and staff to cut.

This government, with its track record of broken promises and mismanagement, is creating hardship and anxiety for the people of our province who trusted them to keep their word. Now they see that trust betrayed and their pocketbooks slightly less full.

OKTOBERFEST

Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): Last Friday, I joined thousands of residents from Waterloo region as well as visitors from across the continent at the official keg-tapping ceremony that marked the beginning of Kitchener-Waterloo's 36th Oktoberfest.

Oktoberfest is our area's celebration of its strong local German-Canadian heritage. Officially started in 1969, this eight-day event has become the largest Bavarian festival in North America, with the best Thanksgiving Day parade in all of Canada. Hundreds of thousands of people lined the streets yesterday morning to watch a spectacular parade that included this year's Grand Marshal, Wendel Clark, former captain of the Toronto Maple Leafs.

Over the life of the festival, thousands will enjoy the hospitality at our Festhallen and be able to attend 45 family and cultural events. Beyond the celebrating, the spirit of *Gemueticlichkeit* helps enrich the local economy and benefits over 70 charities and not-for-profit organizations.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the hard work of the president, Don Willcox, the executive director, Larry Blundell, the volunteer board of directors and the hundreds of other volunteers who make this festival such a tremendous success, year after year.

As Oktoberfest is still going on, I would also like to invite all of my colleagues in the Legislature as well as all citizens of Ontario to come to Kitchener-Waterloo and help celebrate Canada's great Bavarian festival.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): The place where Ontario's legislative rubber meets our province's road is its economy, and our province is voting on this government's performance with a robust economy.

Ontario's unemployment rate has fallen to its lowest level in more than three years. Ontario businesses have responded to our province's economic climate and how it is improving by creating a net 80,000 new jobs. That's like an entire medium-sized Ontario city all finding work within the last year. And according to the Conference Board of Canada, Ontario can expect this strong GDP performance to continue in the years to come.

Ontario is becoming more attractive to businesses. The management consulting firm KPMG reports that Ontario is now one of the most cost-competitive jurisdictions in the world. This has been done even as Ontario continues to invest in the health care of all of its citizens and in the education of the young minds whose intellectual capital will drive prosperity in the years to come.

One year ago, Ontarians voted for change. Change is what Ontario has received, and Ontario's businesses and its workers like what they see.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Ms Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): Nearly one year ago, Ontarians chose change. Looking back over the past year, we have seen a lot of challenges and a few surprises, including a \$5.6-billion deficit left by Ernie Eves and his Tories.

Through it all, our government has been working hard. We are cleaning up the mess left behind by the previous government, and we are building a better province in which to work, live and raise a family.

What Ontarians care about is how well their children are served by the education system, how well they are cared for by our health care system, and that the economy is strong.

After one year, class sizes in the early grades are down in more than 1,300 schools. We also have more teachers in our schools, including in Nipissing alone, where we have 16 new teachers. This will help improve student test scores in reading, writing and math.

We are also making investments in health, ensuring that another 2,400 nurses are on the job, new MRIs are being put in place, and \$191 million in new funding is being invested in long-term care across the province, including \$1.2 million annually in my riding of Nipissing.

And the economy is enjoying steady growth.

We are delivering change that is making Ontario better. We have stopped the decline in public services and we are now working to improve our services for the people we are privileged to serve. We remain the only party that can deliver the change Ontarians want and need. We look forward to working with Ontarians on three more years of real positive change.

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I know that many of you are quite excited seeing that your members are back, but I would much rather we have a bit of quiet here. I know you would like to hear this.

I beg to inform the House that Mr Runciman, the member for the electoral district of Leeds-Grenville, is recognized as the leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition.

There are also other interesting things to listen to.

REPORT, INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I beg to inform the House that on August 19, 2004, the report of the Honourable Coulter A. Osborne, Integrity Commissioner for Ontario, responding to the complaint of John Baird, MPP for Nepean-Carleton, regarding the Honourable Greg Sorbara, Minister of Finance, was tabled. An

addendum to this report was tabled on September 8, 2004.

REPORT OF CHIEF ELECTION OFFICER

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I beg to inform the House that on September 2, 2004, the report of the Chief Election Officer on the preparation and delivery of the 2003 provincial general election was tabled.

REPORTS, INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I also want to say that I beg to inform the House that on September 23, 2004, the report of the Honourable Coulter A. Osborne, Integrity Commissioner for Ontario, responding to the complaint of Jim Flaherty, MPP for Whitby-Ajax, regarding the Honourable Greg Sorbara, Minister of Finance, was tabled.

Also, I beg to inform the House that on September 23, 2004, the report of the Honourable Coulter A. Osborne, Integrity Commissioner for Ontario, responding to the complaint of Bob Runciman, MPP for Leeds-Grenville, regarding the Honourable Dalton McGuinty, Premier of Ontario, was tabled.

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ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I beg to inform the House that on June 29, 2004, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor was pleased to assent to a certain bill in his office.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr Todd Decker): The following is the title of the bill to which His Honour did assent:

Bill 56, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family medical leave and other matters / Projet de loi 56, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne le congé familial pour raison médicale et d'autres questions.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): I beg leave to present a report on drug programs activity from the standing committee on public accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr Sterling: First of all, I would like to thank all members of the public accounts committee for working

in tandem with each other to present these reports that I'm presenting today.

The committee held hearings on a follow-up to the audit that appeared in the Provincial Auditor's 2001 annual report. Members focused their attention and recommendations on six areas: the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's drug strategy review; timely updates of the Ontario drug benefit formula; prices paid by the ODB; written agreements with brand name drug manufacturers; the ministry's Health Network System, which links it to pharmacies; and pharmacy inspection coverage.

I move adjournment of the debate.

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

Mr Sterling: I beg leave to present a report on children's mental health services from the standing committee on public accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker: Does the member wish to make a statement?

Mr Sterling: The committee met with the staff of the newly created Ministry of Children and Youth Services. The areas covered by the committee's report and recommendations include quality of service, waiting lists and related capacity issues, performance measurement, and the control of transfer payments to agencies.

I would like to move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker: Mr Sterling moves adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Sterling: I beg leave to present a report on court services from the standing committee on public accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker: Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr Sterling: The committee addressed operational and management aspects of the court services division, namely the administrative structure of the courts, case backlogs, information systems and the use of new technologies, capital projects, and performance reporting as these relate to providing a fair and accessible justice system.

The committee prepared recommendations to address the new administration governing structure; delays in the system; compliance with Management Board directives as they relate to capital projects; property portfolio management matters; and the processing of cases.

I move adjournment of the debate.

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

Mr Sterling: I beg leave to present a report on the policy and consumer protection services division from the standing committee on public accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker: Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr Sterling: The audit objectives were to determine whether the division had adequate procedures and systems to ensure compliance with the relevant legis-

lation and ministry policies, and secondly, to review the ministry's monitoring of delegated administrative authorities, or DAAs. The areas addressed during the hearings and subsequently in the committee's report included following up on consumer complaints, monitoring of cemetery trust accounts, and the overall performance of the delegated administrative authorities.

The committee's recommendations addressed the ministry's enforcement regime, the cemetery database project, the administration of trust funds, and DAA accountability and governance matters.

I would like to move adjournment of this debate.

The Speaker: Mr Sterling has moved the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Sterling: Lastly, I beg leave to present a report on the Family Responsibility Office from the standing committee on public accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker: Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr Sterling: The committee reported on the Family Responsibility Office in 2000 and again in 2004. In 2003, the Provincial Auditor concentrated on the policies and procedures in place to enforce support orders and the level of service delivery achieved by the office. The discussion during the hearings concentrated on enforcement, staff resources and performance measurement.

The committee's recommendations covered such areas as the delivery of client services; the proposed case management model; enforcement strategy; impact of new technology; staffing requirements; and assessment through performance measures, benchmarking and client services.

I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker: Mr Sterling has moved the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on general government and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 26, An Act to amend the Planning Act / Projet de loi 26, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire.

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

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on social policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 100, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 100, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité, la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

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

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 1359 to 1404.

The Speaker: All those in favour, please rise.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Parsons, Ernie
Bartolucci, Rick	Fonseca, Peter	Patten, Richard
Bentley, Christopher	Gerretsen, John	Peters, Steve
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gravelle, Michael	Peterson, Tim
Bountrogianni, Marie	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Bradley, James J.	Jeffrey, Linda	Pupatello, Sandra
Brotten, Laurel C.	Kennedy, Gerard	Qaadri, Shafiq
Brown, Michael A.	Kular, Kuldip	Racco, Mario G.
Brownell, Jim	Kwinter, Monte	Ramal, Khalil
Bryant, Michael	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramsay, David
Cansfield, Donna H.	Leal, Jeff	Rinaldi, Lou
Caplan, David	Levac, Dave	Sandals, Liz
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Marsales, Judy	Sergio, Mario
Colle, Mike	Matthews, Deborah	Smith, Monique
Cordiano, Joseph	Mauro, Bill	Smitherman, George
Craitor, Kim	McGuinty, Dalton	Sorbara, Greg
Crozier, Bruce	McMeekin, Ted	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
Dhillon, Vic	Meilleur, Madeleine	Watson, Jim
Di Cocco, Caroline	Milloy, John	Wilkinson, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mitchell, Carol	Wong, Tony C.
Duguid, Brad	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duncan, Dwight	Oraziotti, David	Zimmer, David

The Speaker: All those against, please rise.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Prue, Michael
Baird, John R.	Jackson, Cameron	Runciman, Robert W.
Bisson, Gilles	Klees, Frank	Scott, Laurie
Chudleigh, Ted	Kormos, Peter	Sterling, Norman W.
Churley, Marilyn	Martel, Shelley	Tascona, Joseph N.
Dunlop, Garfield	Martiniuk, Gerry	Wilson, Jim
Flaherty, Jim	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hampton, Howard	Murdoch, Bill	Yakabuski, John
Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John	
Horwath, Andrea	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 69; the nays are 28.

The Speaker: The bill is therefore ordered for second reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I beg to inform the House that during the adjournment, the Clerk of the House received reports from the standing committee on

government agencies dated August 24 and September 29, 2004.

Pursuant to standing order 106(e)9, these reports are deemed to be adopted by the House.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): May I at this moment call your attention to, in the Speaker's gallery, Gary Malkowski, a former member for York East from the 35th Parliament. Correction: He is in the east gallery.

I also want to draw your attention to, in the public gallery, Herb Epp from Waterloo North in the 32nd, 33rd and 34th Parliaments.

Welcome.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ACCESSIBILITY FOR ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR L'ACCESSIBILITÉ POUR LES PERSONNES HANDICAPÉES DE L'ONTARIO

Mrs Bountrogianni moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 118, An Act respecting the development, implementation and enforcement of standards relating to accessibility with respect to goods, services, facilities, employment, accommodation, buildings and all other things specified in the Act for persons with disabilities / Projet de loi 118, Loi traitant de l'élaboration, de la mise en oeuvre et de l'application de normes concernant l'accessibilité pour les personnes handicapées en ce qui concerne les biens, les services, les installations, l'emploi, le logement, les bâtiments et toutes les autres choses qu'elle précise.

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

Minister?

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Not at this time, Speaker; during ministerial statements.

1410

ARCHIVES AWARENESS WEEK ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA SEMAINE DE SENSIBILISATION AUX ARCHIVES

Mr O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 119, An Act to proclaim Archives Awareness Week / Projet de loi 119, Loi proclamant la Semaine de sensibilisation aux archives.

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

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Ontario has a rich, colourful and recorded history. Archives play an essential role in the preservation, use and restoration of available documents so that we never lose sight of our collective memory as citizens of Ontario.

CITY OF TORONTO AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA CITÉ DE TORONTO

Ms Wynne moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 120, An Act to amend the City of Toronto Act, 1997 / Projet de loi 120, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la cité de Toronto.

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

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): If passed, this legislation will give the city of Toronto the power to set its own ward boundaries, determine the number of city councillors, amend the role of community councils and administer its own elections, including setting the length of each term for city councillors, setting the dates of its municipal elections, setting its election finance rules and controlling its voters list. If passed, this legislation will be a meaningful recognition of the maturity and competence of the city, and I look forward to a good debate on this issue.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

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

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon Mr Duncan: I move, notwithstanding standing order 96(d), that the following changes be made to the ballot list of private members' public business: Mrs Jeffrey and Mr Kular exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr Kular assumes ballot item 67 and Mrs Jeffrey assumes ballot item 42; Mr Yakabuski and Mr Runciman exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr Runciman assumes ballot item 60 and Mr Yakabuski assumes ballot item 33.

Further, I move that, notwithstanding standing order 96(g), notice for ballot items 32, 33, 34 and 35 be waived.

The Speaker: Mr Duncan moves, pursuant to standing order 96(d), that the following changes be made to the—

Interjection: Dispense.

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

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to move a motion respecting committee membership and to have the question on the motion put immediately, without debate or amendment.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I think we're anticipating a lot today. Do we have consent for Mr Duncan's motion? Agreed.

Hon Mr Duncan: I move that the following changes be made in the membership of the following committees: standing committee on government agencies, Mr Hudak in place of Mrs Witmer; standing committee on justice policy, Mrs Witmer in place of Mr Hudak.

The Speaker: Mr Duncan moves that the following changes be made in the membership of the following committees: standing committee on government agencies—

Interjection: Dispense.

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

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

LOI SUR LES PERSONNES HANDICAPÉES DE L'ONTARIO

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Mr Speaker, allow me to welcome you and all members of this Legislature back to this august chamber on this, a very proud day for Ontario.

I say that because today this government introduces the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2004. This is landmark legislation. It will improve access to workplaces and public spaces, employment, customer service, communications and transportation.

L'Ontario devrait être fier de ce projet de loi. Tout le monde mérite la possibilité d'apprendre, de travailler et de jouer dans toute la mesure de son potentiel. Ce projet de loi devrait rendre l'Ontario plus productif. Ce sont tous les résidents et résidentes de l'Ontario qui bénéficient des possibilités offertes à chacun et à chacune d'entre eux.

This bill should make Ontario proud. Every person deserves the opportunity to learn, work and play to his or her full potential. This bill will help make Ontario more productive. All Ontarians benefit when we tap into the potential of each Ontarian. I often say that Ontario succeeds when we all work, dream and build together,

and "all" must certainly include in every way the 1.5 million Ontarians with a disability.

Before the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration tells us more about this bill, I briefly want to acknowledge the work that has gone into it. I especially want to acknowledge the efforts of several advocates for people with disabilities, and specifically mention one: David Lepofsky.

We've all heard it said that someone is made of Teflon when nothing seems to stick to them. I suspect that David is made of Velcro. In fact, he will virtually attach himself to you if you have any carriage, in any way whatsoever, over this file. His passion and determination are a testament, I believe, to the desire of Ontarians with disabilities to have the opportunity to fully contribute to life in this great province of ours.

I want to acknowledge as well the members of the Legislature who have taken a consistent interest in this issue, particularly members of my own caucus who, as critics for this area while in opposition, and now as government members, have made a real and lasting contribution.

Finally, I want to say directly to our fellow Ontarians with disabilities: We need your work. We need your buying power. We need your contributions to this economy and this society that we all share. We need you and all Ontarians to realize your full potential so this great province can fulfill its potential as a place with an appreciation of life and a quality of life that are truly second to none.

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Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Mr Speaker, may I welcome you and all honourable members back to the Legislature for this first day of our autumn sitting and the first day after Thanksgiving.

Ten years ago, a group of 20 Ontarians with disabilities forged a committee with the sole intent of making Ontario barrier-free for people with disabilities. They understood that the aisle of a store may be too narrow to accommodate someone with a wheelchair; a playground may have an insurmountable curb around it; an elevator may have no Braille markings on the buttons; and an on-the-spot job application may be impossible for someone who has dyslexia. An Ontarian who has mental health problems may face stigma in any number of ways, particularly in the workforce.

Even though there has been progress to eliminate barriers for those with disabilities, there is so much more work to be done. That is why today I'm honoured to introduce legislation to meet the dreams and aspirations of those Ontarians who have worked so long and so hard to make Ontario fully accessible. I am honoured to introduce the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act because we need to allow all Ontarians to participate fully in the life of our province.

Making Ontario truly accessible for the 1.5 million Ontarians with disabilities is a matter of vital importance.

We want Ontario to lead, not lag, in accessibility. Together, Ontarians have worked, and are working, to build a province of full inclusion. That is how it should be, and yet for any Ontarian with a disability, discrimination and lack of accessibility are very real: real physical barriers; real technological, communications, bureaucratic barriers, barriers that limit the hopes of young people to achieve their full potential and barriers that deprive senior citizens of their integrity.

Ten years ago, those Ontarians with disabilities put together a simple statement of principles for making our province barrier-free. Those principles are at the heart of the legislation that the government is introducing today. Most significantly, the final principle states that new legislation “must be more than mere window dressing.... It must have real force and effect.” This Legislature unanimously adopted that resolution. The disability community supported this approach.

I happen to believe that the earlier legislation, the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, was introduced with good intent and good faith, but it was just too weak. It did not comprehensively cover the private sector. It did not include standards and timelines to eliminate and prevent barriers. The previous legislation did not make a difference in the way that really matters to people with disabilities, like access to stores, restaurants and medical offices. It was opposed by many in the disability community. It was opposed by the opposition parties in the Legislature.

Over the past several years, a number of Liberal members have pushed very hard for the new legislation that I am introducing today. They met with Ontarians with disabilities. They listened to them and they have pushed our government to act. The honourable member for Windsor-St Clair, now the Minister of Energy and House leader, led the way. The now Minister of Agriculture and Food held hearings in every part of the province, and the honourable member for Prince Edward-Hastings has done invaluable work for the disability community for many years. The late Dominic Agostino, our party's first critic on disability issues, was a champion of the first order for this legislation.

I must also recognize the honourable member for Burlington and the honourable member for Trinity-Spadina, who care deeply about this issue, and, of course, the Accessibility Advisory Council of Ontario, who have tirelessly promoted accessibility for people with disabilities. Their support during our province-wide consultations has been essential.

I would like to acknowledge the Premier, who is a forceful advocate for people with disabilities, as was his father before him in this Legislature.

The Premier wrote last year, “We believe that the Harris-Eves government's Ontarians with Disabilities Act does not even begin to adequately address the needs and rights of countless Ontarians. We will introduce ... a strong and effective ... act.”

That is precisely what we are doing today. The legislation is very much crafted and fine-tuned by what we

have heard from the disability community and those in other sectors.

Throughout the first part of this year, my former parliamentary assistant, Dr Kular, and I heard from thousands of Ontarians. I want to thank the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale for his tireless efforts, and I wish him well in his new responsibilities.

I also want to welcome my new parliamentary assistant, the member from London-Fanshawe, who has already approached this legislation with diligence and enthusiasm.

Throughout those consultations this spring, we met with disability organizations; individuals with disabilities; the private sector, including business people of enormous goodwill and determination; leaders from retail businesses, hospitals, colleges and universities, transportation services; and students.

In fact, we had a Webcast that received more than 2,000 hits across the province. Some of those people have joined us today.

I would like to ask my colleagues to acknowledge my friends in the gallery who have so willingly shared their time and knowledge to help us make Ontario accessible: David Lepofsky, who was already mentioned by the Premier, and the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee—thank you; the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario; the Ontario March of Dimes—thank you very much for your efforts; and many others.

This legislation, if passed, will incorporate all 11 principles enunciated by the disability community and agreed to by the Legislature six years ago.

Of course, the government has already moved forward on complementary fronts: expansion of funding for mental health services, major new investments in children's health programs, new housing for Ontarians with developmental disabilities, the first increase in Ontario disability support program payments in 11 years, and increased rebates for vehicles to transport people with physical disabilities.

To make truly comprehensive progress, though, we need legislation that will deliver fundamental changes—real change—to the way we think and act as a society.

This legislation would make us an international leader in accessibility for people with disabilities.

The bill would call for strong action by the provincial government, the broader public sector and, for the very first time, the private sector.

Standards to be met every five years or less to achieve measurable long-term goals could be adopted as regulations, requiring all sectors and people with disabilities to develop them together.

I'm talking about standards in areas that affect people in their day-to-day lives; standards that would address barriers related to physical and mental health, sensory—the full range of developmental and learning disabilities, visible and invisible; standards that would be given the force of law through regulation and enforcement and that would require affected persons and organizations to comply with tough penalties for violators.

Taking tough measures requires people of honour and commitment, and it takes leadership from the business community. Many business leaders have already seen the true value of accessibility in terms of expanded markets for their products and services—an estimated \$25 billion a year, according to a Royal Bank report.

I thank in particular such business organizations as the Retail Council of Canada, the Greater Toronto Hotel Association, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association, Dofasco and the Canadian Standards Association.

Every Ontarian should have the opportunity to learn, work, play, participate and contribute to the maximum of their talents, desires and dreams. That is essential to the social and economic vibrancy of this province.

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There was a time in this province's history, Mr Speaker, when I would not have been able to address you because women were denied their democratic rights. I personally remember a time when, as a student, engineering co-op placements were limited because some companies did not have washrooms for women. They were deemed an unnecessary expense. Today that is unimaginable.

I want that same inclusive thinking when it comes to disabilities. I want people in this province to say, "Can you imagine there was a time when people complained about the cost of a ramp? Can you imagine there was a time when menus were not available in alternate formats? What were they thinking?"

Through public education we can change attitudes, one of the biggest barriers people with disabilities face. We need to raise a generation of Ontarians who are acutely aware of accessibility, who are determined to create a truly accessible and barrier-free society.

The creation of an accessible Ontario is a vision and a job for all of us. That's our challenge, that is our responsibility and, most importantly, that is our extraordinary opportunity.

As we return here from Thanksgiving, let us give thanks not just for what we have but for what we can become. In that spirit of reaching out for our potential, in that spirit of inclusion, I would like to thank those who assisted me to finish this statement in American Sign Language. Full accessibility benefits us all. It is the cornerstone for strong communities and a strong economy.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Responses?

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): It's my pleasure today to rise, on the first day back in the Legislature, to greet this new legislation. I say in all fairness, like many members of this Legislature who have ever grown up in a house with a disabled member, they know how important this legislation is. So in the true spirit of this legislation, we can only express our appreciation for anything that advances the cause for disabled people in our province.

This province has a proud reputation. It was the first jurisdiction in North America to have a human rights code and a human rights commission. This province was

the first, with Bill 125 from our government, to have comprehensive disability legislation, the first disability support program on the continent. So it is fitting that this province today makes an effort to move the yardsticks forward for full citizenship for all of its citizens.

I too would like to acknowledge the presence of a few of the groups who were very supportive and instrumental in advising the former government in terms of developing the first disability legislation in our province. I recognize Dean LaBute, a member of the accessibility council who's in the Legislature today. I certainly encourage the minister to retain this valuable asset of volunteerism for moving forward the agenda, as well as the construction of the disability directorate which was part of that legislation.

As always, these issues are measured in terms of legislation, but they're also measured by financial commitment. Clearly our government was pleased with its \$6-billion investment over eight years to enhance services in accessibility in our province. During the debate on Bill 125, all members made references to the incredible amount of investment required. Today's announcement and legislation has not been costed; I understand that media questions earlier today were not satisfied. But I recall vividly, during the debate on Bill 125 when it was tabled by our government, the member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot very clearly saying, "I don't care what it costs. We should just spend all the money necessary." Although that's a very Liberal view of the world, the member for St Catharines, participating and laying out the official position for the Liberal Party at the time, indicated that any action similar to the legislation being passed today would amount to downloading and therefore the province should pay for all of these costs. Now, if that still remains the official position of the Liberal Party and therefore the government of the day now, if that is the case, then we need to have a full costing of the implications of this legislation.

It's interesting to note that about 80% of Bill 125 has been retained in this legislation. It has been modified. You are dismantling the old legislation. However, what's fascinating to me is that for the first time in my 20 years in this building, you're saying you're going to repeal the bill but you have to repeal it in sections over the next 10 years because it has within it the accessibility planning framework, unique anywhere in North America, that we have here.

Briefly, Minister, I want you to be aware that the largest single resistance I got as Minister of Citizenship was from AMO and from municipalities. What occurred in Bill 125 was to empower disabled persons in their own municipalities to literally not allow a building to be built unless it was compliant to the standards set in that community—minimum standards set by the province, but even better standards. I notice that your legislation confirms that and takes it even further. I notice that your penalty provisions in the act take the fine for filing false documents, whereas in the previous legislation those were outright fines of \$50,000 for non-compliance.

We will participate in the discussions and the debates. It was frustrating for me as the Minister of Citizenship that the Liberal Party never participated in amendments or in bringing forward ideas. I want to reassure you that you can count on the Progressive Conservative Party.

Interjection.

Mr Jackson: Not one amendment was tabled by your critic. That is a fact.

You can count on the Progressive Conservative Party, under the leadership of John Tory, to work with you, Minister, to make this the best legislation in the country. Thank you.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): It is indeed a privilege and an honour to be here on this day, the opening of the Legislature, and a privilege and an honour that the first bill introduced is the Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

It has taken many long years, over three successive governments, over four or five terms of office now, for an act to come before us. I have to tell you, Gary Malkowski was introduced earlier to the Legislature. He is sitting there. He was the author of the first Ontarians with Disabilities Act. He was there trying to do what I think was the right thing all those years ago.

We saw, after his act failed to pass and employment equity failed to pass, that a new government came along and tried their best, I think, to bring in an Ontarians with Disabilities Act, but it was severely watered down. It was pretty bad, I have to say. Even though Cam Jackson, the member from Burlington, spoke and was very passionate about it, it was a watered-down bill that did not get the support of the opposition parties and indeed did not pass. It was withdrawn because many, many people, including the opposition parties and the disabled community, saw that it was not as good as the original bill introduced by then member Malkowski from York East.

I have to say I'm a little disappointed in what we have today. It's sad to see how minimal the commitment to the disabled actually is. It has been reintroduced today. You know, I go back to that hallowed day, I guess, October 29, 1998, when all parties in this Legislature passed the motion. I want to read just a little bit of what you promised, members on that side of the House who were here. You promised to "seek to achieve a barrier-free Ontario for persons with disabilities within as short a time as is reasonably possible, with implementation to begin immediately upon proclamation." That's what was promised six years ago.

Today we have to look at what has actually happened, and I look only to section 1 of the bill. Section 1(a) says,

"The purpose of this act is to benefit all Ontarians by

"(a) developing, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards in order to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, occupancy of accommodation, employment buildings, structures and premises"—all of which are good, but then the kicker—"on or before January 1, 2025"—21 years from now; not as soon as reasonably practicable but 21 years from now.

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That is a whole generation of Ontarians who will grow up and not see total equality. Yes, they may see marginal improvements that you're promising, but they are never going to see total equality until 2025. This whole generation has been waiting 10 years and now they are expected to wait another 21 years.

The reality is that what you are setting up here is little more than a study group. The reality is that the standards you are going to set by regulation—you are going to do that only after you consult with the affected businesses and the affected municipalities who have shown in the past that they are often very reluctant to spend money where they need to spend it.

How are you going to begin immediately? That's the question I have of you. Where are the standards in this bill? I can't find them. Where is the money for enforcement? There's no money for enforcement. In fact, the minister responsible for the budget has openly mused about laying people off. Where is the funding for churches, for community centres, for non-profits, for municipalities? Who is going to pay for all this?

This is a big announcement today. In your first budget you promised many things and you have not delivered those for the disabled. You promised to help them but you eliminated the 8% provincial tax on the vehicles that carried them around. You are fighting in court parents with autistic children. Even though you've given some 3% to ODSP as a payment increase, that is really quite pitiful in the grand scheme of things.

To reiterate: There is no intervener funding, the regulations are not spelled out, and the 2025 date is certainly not acceptable to us or to the people who are working on this bill.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MINISTERS' INTEGRITY

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition):

At the outset, I want to say that I'll treasure the warm reception I received earlier. I'll treasure it because I suspect that it will be short-lived, starting now on the government benches.

My first question is to the Premier. I'd like to ask you a number of questions that relate to the ethical standards of your government and the behaviour of your cabinet ministers.

When you were on this side of the House, you had a great deal to say about ministers living up to a high standard of ethical behaviour. You said in June this year, "I believe the people of Ontario have a right to know ... about the nature of ... ethical standards that you set for your caucus, your cabinet and others who work for you." Premier, in the spirit of that right-to-know declaration, can you tell us what standards you are setting for your ministers and staff when it comes to approaching

stakeholders for contributions to the Liberal Party of Ontario?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): Let me take the opportunity at the outset to congratulate the interim leader on the assumption of his new responsibilities. I wish him nothing but the very best in the new capacity.

I'm sure he has more information that he's going to provide with respect to that opening question. But let me say that we have been through our first year, and I am very proud of the standard we have set as a government when it comes to integrity, when it comes to the behaviour of our ministers, the behaviour of our cabinet and the behaviour of our government generally—very proud of that, Speaker.

Mr Runciman: The Premier may want to revise that answer as we proceed.

The Premier said in April 2000, "I believe that cabinet ministers should live up to a high standard of responsibility and unquestionable ethical behaviour." In that vein, Mr Premier, do you think it's appropriate for a minister and/or his staff to be pursuing their stakeholders, people who have a vested interest in the decisions made by your government, for donations to the Liberal Party of Ontario? Do you think that's appropriate, and if not, what are you going to do about it?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I would expect that all members of the cabinet and indeed all members of the government would respect the rules when it comes to soliciting donations.

If the member opposite, the Leader of the Opposition, has some specific complaint that he would like to make public or that he would like to refer to the Integrity Commissioner, then we would only be too pleased to cooperate in any way possible.

Every single complaint that has been lodged with the Integrity Commissioner to date has been rejected by the Integrity Commissioner. Notwithstanding any overtures, complaints or allegations made by members opposite, the Integrity Commissioner—an independent, objective third party—has found in each and every instance that this government is blameless.

Mr Runciman: We expected a more fulsome explanation from the individual who claimed to be the champion of integrity and accountability.

Premier, as a final supplementary, we've been contacted by a number of officials in the health sector who are quite upset with direct approaches by a key member of the Minister of Health's staff asking them to purchase tickets or tables for the minister's fundraisers. I have an e-mail that was given to me by a health sector employee.

Mr Todd Ross, who is responsible for appointments in the minister's office, has reached out to touch virtually everyone in the health care community in order to fatten the Liberal Party's bank account.

If Ontarians want to be considered for a public appointment or want to have their voice heard during the development of public policy, are they required to cut a cheque to the Liberal Party in order to get their foot in the door? Is this the new McGuinty Ontario?

Hon Mr McGuinty: This is yet another in an endless series of spurious allegations which the Leader of the Opposition seems to luxuriate in.

I am advised that this individual is not employed by the Ministry of Health. I'd tell the member opposite that if he has some specifics or some real particulars he'd like to present to us or to the Integrity Commissioner, we would be only too pleased to respond to those.

I can say this: We have set a very high standard for ourselves. We are committed to improving the quality of life for Ontarians. I am pleased and proud that we've made significant progress, whether in health care, education, the environment or the economy.

Today, it was with a great deal of pride that the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration introduced the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2004.

Those are the things that we are working on. Those are the things that we are focused on. That's what this government is all about.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): New question.

Mr Runciman: According to the government phone book, that individual is working in the minister's office. We have a date on the e-mail as well.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. We'll give the Leader of the Opposition an opportunity to ask the question.

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): This is another question of ethics and integrity that involves the Minister of Health, but I'm going to direct my question to the Premier.

Perhaps, Premier, you can explain to this House why, time after time, we've seen highly paid positions of influence handed to your Liberal cronies. The most recent example is the appointment of Elinor Caplan to review the home care system.

It has become clear over the past year that it pays to be a Liberal. Time after time, we've seen party loyalists appointed to panels, boards and commissions for various levels of remuneration. But this appointment takes the cake. You might say that this was the mother of all appointments.

You also broke your government's own rules and regulations and awarded Mrs Caplan an untendered contract.

You're paying Mrs Caplan the equivalent of \$140,000 a year. That's more than the Minister of Health.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Could I have some order, please?

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): This has gone downhill from when Ernie was here.

The Speaker: Order, Minister of Finance.

The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Runciman: The government is paying Mrs Caplan the equivalent of \$140,000 a year. That's more

than the Minister of Health. There might be some justification in that, but we won't get into it.

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Premier, you are the chief of the watch for the government. You have repeatedly spoken out about ending cynicism in government and then you let appointment after appointment go unchecked and leave taxpayers on the hook for thousands of dollars in salaries being paid to your Liberal cronies. Premier, the question—

The Speaker: Thank you. Premier?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I am hopeful that at some point somebody over there, but the Leader of the Opposition in particular, will begin to address those issues that weigh heavily on the minds of Ontario families, like their health care, like their education, like the nature of their environment and what's happening with respect to jobs and the economy.

Let me remind the member opposite of some of the people we have been proud to retain for their ability, competence and integrity—I include on this very short list Bob Rae, Bill Davis, Marion Boyd and Jake Epp, all capable, competent people—and we will continue to do so as we move forward.

Mr Runciman: Those good appointments certainly pale in the wake of the number of Liberal appointments.

Premier, while you were in opposition, shortly before the election, you said—and I'm paraphrasing—"At the end of the day, the Premier has to set some standards for his cabinet and his cabinet ministers." Then you warned your new MPPs to beware of human frailties. You said that political—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Minister of Finance, can you come to order, please.

Mr Runciman: Mr Speaker, I hope you'll show some latitude if they keep interrupting my questions.

The Premier warned his new MPPs to beware of human frailties. He said that political staff—and Mrs Caplan apparently is political staff—would undergo unusually rigorous screening to avoid conflicts of interest or using positions for personal gain.

Premier, your latest appointment is a woman who's no stranger to Ontario politics. You've appointed a person who was forced to resign from cabinet due to conflict-of-interest charges, the same person who was demoted from the Chrétien cabinet for, according to the gospel of the Toronto Star, not having a firm grip on a difficult department.

Premier, this appointment speaks to the credibility and integrity of your administration. Will you show some leadership and accountability? Will you step in and put this appointment on hold pending a complete review from the committee on government agencies? Will you do that?

Hon Mr McGuinty: A few more names that I'm sure the Leader of the Opposition will be interested in learning about, people whom we have also appointed: Brian Coburn, Marilyn Mushinski, Bill Saunderson, David

Crombie. I look forward to further questions so I can further enlighten him with respect to the number of Tories we've been appointing since we got into government.

Mr Runciman: I think the Premier requires enlightenment on a range of issues. Clearly the Premier doesn't like the question because it strikes a little close to his cabinet and speaks to the ethics of those the Premier has advising him. You see, the Premier is leery of answering because his continued appointment of Liberal cronies is making him look bad.

Taxpayers deserve to know the going rate for being a loyal Liberal. Mrs Caplan just received a \$70,000 payout for her time as a federal member. She was granted an approximately \$700,000 pension buyout for her time as a provincial MPP. And now you want taxpayers to pay her another \$140,000 annualized, plus expenses. Did I miss anything, or is that just a partial list?

Premier, how can you justify appointing a lifetime Liberal to a position that pays \$140,000 per year on top of expenses and pensions without any review or consultation? Will you commit today to send the appointment of Elinor Caplan to the legislative committee on government agencies in order to afford the transparency that an appointment of this magnitude deserves? Will you do that?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I have tremendous confidence in Elinor Caplan, who has served as Minister of Health in this Legislature, who served in the federal government, who has a lengthy record of experience and has demonstrated tremendous competency and integrity. I would also say the very same thing about one Bette Stephenson, whom we have also appointed in our capacity as a government. These are both people who are impeccable in terms of their character, who are supremely competent when it comes to the responsibilities they have assumed.

We will continue to bring that approach to the appointments this government makes. It is not a matter of political stripe. It is a matter of looking for the best people to get the job done, and we will continue to do that.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Before I ask the leader of the third party to ask his question, I am going to ask the government side to tone their noise down a bit. It's the only opportunity the opposition has for a chance to ask questions.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Why didn't you stop the clock?

The Speaker: Order. I'm having too many interruptions going back and forth. I'm also going to ask the opposition to get your questions in under the required time.

HEPATITIS C

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Your first year has been a year of excuses and broken promises: promises of

Highway 407 toll caps, of preventing development on the Oak Ridges moraine, of preserving the Hydro rate cap, the promise not to delist health care services, promises to help autistic children and promises of no new taxes. On issue after issue, you said one thing before the election and have done exactly the opposite after.

There is one issue that is far too important for more McGuinty government broken promises, and that's the issue of health care. Will you commit today that all the federal government money for health care will be used by your government to fund health care services and nothing else?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): It's very interesting to find that the leader of the third party now has become a champion for public health care. The reason that just recently we were able to prevent the expansion of an American company into Ontario which was going to prey on Ontario seniors and their fears was because of the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, which this government proudly passed under the championship of George Smitherman.

But I want to note that the member opposite voted against that very legislation, which we were able to use in a very expeditious and aggressive fashion to protect public health care in Ontario. If Ontarians want to know where we stand on health care, they will know that we support public health care. They should also now know that the members opposite voted against the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act.

Mr Hampton: It was a very direct question: Does the Premier commit that the new federal health money will be spent on health services and nothing else? He couldn't answer.

I want to draw your attention to federal health care dollars related to hepatitis C victims. In 1998, Ontario and other provinces, with Ottawa, created an agreement to help some of the unfortunate and forgotten victims of hepatitis C. Under the agreement, Ontario received \$135 million to provide enhanced health services for those victims. As I say, it's supposed to be used to provide enhanced health services, but it is clear from the Ministry of Health report released on October 1 that the McGuinty government, like the Conservative government before it, isn't using that money for enhanced health services. In fact, the report doesn't even mention enhanced health services. What you're doing is simply funnelling the money into OHIP and then using it like you would use any other OHIP money. It's not going to enhanced health services.

Premier, you said in the election, "Choose change." Why is your policy with respect to hepatitis C victims the same as the policy of the previous Conservative government?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I know the Minister of Health is eager to speak to this.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Earlier in the summer, we were requested by individuals to make known what had come of the expenditures that the government of Canada,

stemming from a legal agreement with the provinces, had spent on the provision of services for individuals in our province with hepatitis C. We took the time necessary to call upon those individuals expert in the provision of services for people with Hepatitis C to develop an appropriate methodology to determine the extent to which all of those investments and dollars had been invested in the expansion of services for people in our province with hepatitis C.

We've been able to confirm that, in point of fact, consistent with the agreement that was signed by the government of Canada and all provinces, including members opposite, the government of Ontario had acted in accordance with that agreement.

1500

What remains outstanding, of course, is an interpretation that goes back to the time that agreement was signed whereby some people had determined that the language suggested that was going to be for out-of-pocket payments. But the legal agreement is very, very clear, and I've been keen to share all the available information that has come to our knowledge with people concerned about this file. I would be happy to provide more information in a supplementary.

Mr Hampton: I find the minister's answer interesting, because this is a copy of the press release and the report of October 1, and it doesn't mention enhanced services. In fact, it avoids the words "enhanced services." And this is a copy of the agreement between Ontario and the federal government. It is very clear. It says "health services for hepatitis C that are not fully insured by publicly financed health care systems in Canada." It talks specifically about enhanced health care services above and beyond what is provided by OHIP.

What is clear from this October 1 report from the Ministry of Health is that you are doing exactly what the former Conservative government did. You're taking federal money that should be used to provide enhanced health care services for unfortunate hepatitis C victims and you're not using it for those enhanced health care services.

In the election, Mr McGuinty said, "Choose change." Tell me, Minister, where is the change when you're doing the same despicable thing that the former Conservatives did in terms of letting down those hepatitis C victims?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I have a very significant point of departure from the honourable member. I am not one of those inclined to think that the provision of extraordinarily good care from our system of health care in this province should be associated with the word "despicable."

The fact of the matter is that the Ministry of Health in this province, through governments and this government, stands for the idea, the principle, that we should always be looking to enhance the quality of care that's available. The word "enhancement" comes to mean many things. One, for instance, is the fact that all the time we have new medical discoveries related to the treatment of

hepatitis C which we seek to take advantage of as quickly as is possible for the people struggling with hepatitis C in our province. This includes members of my family. This is an issue that I am very, very familiar with.

We've gone further than just to make that accounting that was requested of us. We've asked John Plater, who is a distinguished leader from the hepatitis C community, to bring back a group to take a look at a strategic plan that had been developed by the previous government but unfortunately had left some people out of the mix, to do a very, very quick review of their work and to come forward with a strategic plan that we can all share to make sure not only that we provide the best possible treatments in our—

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

Mr Hampton: The minister wants to talk about what he might do in the future. Minister, this is a confidential letter from a friend of yours.

The Speaker: To whom is the question?

Mr Hampton: To the Minister of Health.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Hampton: It's from the former federal Minister of Health, Anne McLellan, to your predecessor, the Conservative Minister of Health. She says there's no difficulty with interpretation. She said then, in January 2003, that Ontario was mispending the hepatitis C money, that it was not being used for the enhanced health services for hepatitis C victims that it should have been used for.

You knew this. Your officials have known this since January 2003. You've been the government for over a year now. Yet it's clear from your own report, where you don't even mention enhanced health services for victims of hepatitis C, that you are following exactly the same policy of the Conservative government you replaced.

Mr McGuinty said, "Choose change." Minister, I ask you again, where is the change for these unfortunate hepatitis C victims when you're short-changing them exactly as the Conservative government short-changed them before you?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The change is there, and it's clear and apparent for people in this province with hepatitis C. The change is this: that we've assembled a group because we want to have a strategic plan which gives us the chance as a province to make sure that at the same time we're delivering the best possible quality of care, we're also reaching out and finding those people who might have hepatitis C and don't know it and helping to prevent hepatitis C infections in the future.

With respect to that member's interpretation of the letter that came, I was provided with a copy of this letter last week. I am seeking to obtain clarification from the federal government, because what is absolutely clear is that a letter written from one minister to another, which I think we both agree does not have the same legal standing as an agreement between jurisdictions, which was signed off on by members of that party while in government—there is surely, across the breadth of our country, a very clear departure from the interpretation that the honourable member brings to the discussion. All

provinces across the country, to the best of the knowledge that we've been able to gain to date, have acted in the same fashion as has the province of Ontario, which is to use those resources to make sure that the quality of care we're providing for people with hepatitis—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr Hampton: Well, Minister, I just spoke with officials in Manitoba. Manitoba has used that hepatitis C money to provide coverage for drugs and medications that otherwise wouldn't be covered in Manitoba. They've used it to provide enhanced services. You've been the Minister of Health for over a year and you are doing exactly what the Conservatives did before you, and all we're hearing from you today is that somewhere down the road you might do something different—another McGuinty government promise. We've heard lots of those.

Minister, this is a cabinet submission dated May 5, 2003. What's important in it is that Ministry of Health lawyers, the same Ministry of Health lawyers who are there now, advised that the Ontario government is mispending hepatitis C dollars. They say, "The agreement supports the conclusion that the parties intended that ... the funds would be used to provide for and enhance the range and accessibility of health care services for individuals with hepatitis C." They say further on, "To arrive at a different conclusion appears to ignore the spirit of the agreement." And then they advocate that Ontario start using it for enhanced services.

Minister, you've been doing for a year exactly what the Conservatives before you did. When are you going to provide the enhanced services required in this agreement? When are we going to see "choose change" instead of more broken promises?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I say to the honourable member in response, I'm going to have the opportunity on Friday, Saturday and Sunday to sit alongside the Minister of Health from the province of Manitoba, Dave Chomiak, a man I have a lot of confidence in. I think when we go through it list by list by list of the services we're providing in the province of Ontario for people with hepatitis C, it's going to bear a striking resemblance to the provision of services for people with hepatitis C in Manitoba.

Just because of his desire to have a partisan stamp on these services, the honourable member seeks to create some distinction which is artificial. The fact of the matter is that provinces and the federal government came together many, many years ago and signed an agreement. In reading the agreement, as many members of the media have had the opportunity to do over the past number of weeks, what is absolutely clear is that there is a decided distinction between the rhetoric associated with that agreement and what the agreement legally binds provinces to provide.

But to suggest that we're resting on our laurels is inappropriate. We are working with leaders in the hepatitis C community to make sure that the province of Ontario stands out in this nation as an exemplary record for providing care for people with hepatitis C.

Mr Hampton: The minister tries to refer to some legal mumbo-jumbo. Your own health ministry lawyers will tell you there is no mumbo-jumbo. They tell you clearly that Ontario has an obligation to provide enhanced services for victims of hepatitis C. They tell you clearly that Ontario has that obligation to spend those dedicated federal health dollars in the way that is outlined here. You haven't been doing that for over a year. You've been following the same discredited policy of your Conservative predecessors.

Mike McCarthy is someone who was infected with hepatitis C through tainted blood, and this is what he has to say: "Now, six years later, not one nickel has gone for any enhanced care, treatment or out-of-pocket expenses reimbursement for tainted-blood victims.... Victims feel like they are a bag of garbage left by the side of the road."

Minister, your Premier said, "Choose change." What I hear you doing today is defending the same tired, discredited policy of the previous Conservatives. When are we going to get the change rather than more broken promises?

1510

Hon Mr Smitherman: It strikes me that the member's tripping all over himself in an effort to create distinctions that aren't there. The fact of the matter is that Ontario has moved forward in a fashion that's entirely consistent with the legal agreement and consistent with what other provinces have done.

But he asks the question, "What have we been doing for the last year?", and here's what I'll tell him. We've been working very hard to invest again in community-based care; to make sure, as an example, that someone in this province, in any part of this vast province, who's struggling with the challenge of finding access to a doctor because they stopped producing them when they were a government and because they were slow to get back to it—we've been working tirelessly to expand the role of the family practitioner, to provide more incentive for them to provide community-based comprehensive care. The fact remains that we're charged with a terrific responsibility, and I'm honoured to be involved in it.

With respect to hepatitis C, here's the commitment that we make. This is our bottom line. The province of Ontario will stand out in Canada as a jurisdiction that is prepared, able, and is providing a level of care that lives up to the high standards expected. What that means is that as new technologies become available and new approaches become available, like new medicines, the province of Ontario will be in a position to support those expanded initiatives, and we will do so by working in co-operation with health care providers and especially with the hepatitis C community.

LIBERAL CAMPAIGN PROMISES

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): The Minister of Health's answers were so long, I've forgotten my question.

My question is for the Premier. Premier, when you ran for office to be Premier more than a year ago now, you made a lot of promises—in fact, more than 231 promises. You costed them, or at least you told the people of the province of Ontario that you costed them. You said that their total cost is \$5.9 billion.

Shortly after you became the government about a year ago, it became known that there was a costing report by the public service of Ontario, the trusted public service of the province. You were asked about that report. In fact, we made an information request for the report under the freedom of information act, and you and your government fought that tooth and nail for almost a full year, until last week, when, as a result of the order, we got the report. Now we know why. The costing by the public service was in excess of \$18 billion—more than three times what you told the people of the province of Ontario.

Will you now come clean and admit to the people of Ontario that you underestimated the costs of your promises by a factor of three—from less than \$6 billion to more than \$18 billion—and that's why you hid the report?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I'm sure that the member opposite would want to be reminded of how the Deputy Minister of Finance described someone's intention to tally up the numbers he put together. He said, specifically, that it would be wrong and "misleading," to quote the Deputy Minister of Finance. He said, "So if somebody were to go through and just add up the columns—that can be done—it would be information that's actually meaningless."

Perhaps we shouldn't be surprised that the member opposite, being part of a party that hid a \$5.6-billion deficit from the people of Ontario, is now prepared to use information that is described by the Deputy Minister of Finance as wrong and misleading with respect to specific numbers.

Mr Flaherty: I understand the Premier's answer to the people of Ontario: "Don't add up the numbers." When they add up the numbers, they get a very different number than he gave the people of Ontario when he added up his numbers and sought election in the province. This is a question of untrustworthiness—or if it's not untrustworthiness, it's plain incompetence. You say "\$5.9 billion" to the people of Ontario. You say, "Elect me because I can do these 231 things and more for \$5.9 billion." You get elected, you get a report from the public service, you hide the report, you go through a budget with \$4 billion of new spending and you don't come clean with the people of Ontario. Tell me, should they consider you untrustworthy, incompetent or both?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I just can't put it any better than did the Deputy Minister of Finance: wrong and "misleading." You cannot tally up those figures. The member opposite knows that some of those stretch out over an expenditure period that is in excess of some 39 years—wrong and misleading.

OMA AGREEMENT

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. One year ago you told people to choose change, and you said that people would get an open and transparent government. Now we find that you have, behind closed doors, negotiated a deal with the Ontario Medical Association and you refuse to tell the people of Ontario what is in the deal.

This is about health care for the people of Ontario, not about your secret arrangement with the doctors. Premier, you know the details, your cabinet knows the details and now the doctors know the details, but you insist on keeping the public in the dark.

I ask you, as the Premier who promised open and transparent government, what are you trying to hide from the public? Will you release the entire agreement so that people can find out what's happening to their health care system?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I wonder why the member opposite is so critical of this particular process when it's one he followed flawlessly when they sat in government. There is a tradition in Ontario, when we negotiate these agreements with the medical community, that the agreement is subject to ratification first by doctors, and once that has been completed, then it is made public. That's something all governments, of all political stripes, have respected in the past and we will respect it in our term.

Mr Hampton: Premier, you may think that explanation passes, but what we've found out through some of the leaks is that in fact this agreement has a number of side deals. One of the side deals says to doctors that if they trim \$200 million from the Ontario drug benefit plan—that is, if they take benefits away from the disabled, the poorest and the elderly—your government will bonus the doctors with \$50 million more money. Many doctors are objecting to this. Some call it a bribe. Some call it an inappropriate way to address health care issues.

Premier, what's your impression? Don't you think the people of Ontario deserve to know what's in this agreement before they wake up and find more side deals like this that don't enhance health care and in fact take away benefits from the most vulnerable people in the province? When are you going to open up the agreement? When are you going to tell them about the side deals, Premier: after more people get hurt?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I'm not, for all the obvious reasons, about to speculate on the contents of that agreement. I would suggest that the member opposite has just enough information now to be dangerous with respect to speculating about the contents of the agreement.

What I can say by way of facts is this: When the member opposite formed the government, they froze funding for drugs. We have, in our first year, put a quarter of a billion dollars more into drugs. I think that speaks to our values.

ELECTRICITY RESTRUCTURING

RESTRUCTURATION DU SECTEUR
DE L'ÉLECTRICITÉ

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): Ma question s'adresse au ministre de l'Énergie. Minister, the McGuinty government is charting new ground in the history of Ontario's electricity sector. The positive changes the government is making will ensure Ontarians continued prosperity by creating a conservation culture and a cleaner Ontario while delivering a reliable, sustainable and diverse supply of competitively priced power for Ontario.

Bill 100, the Electricity Restructuring Act, 2004, provides the basis for achieving this by proposing sweeping legislative change. Minister, what will be the role of the Ontario Energy Board under the proposed legislation to restructure the electricity sector?

1520

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I'm pleased to answer the question. Under Bill 100, the Ontario Energy Board would have a stronger role in protecting Ontario consumers through licensing and rate regulation, something the previous government rejected. They left small consumers at the will of the free market. The OEB would ensure economic efficiency, cost-effectiveness and financial viability of the elements of Ontario's electricity system. Its mandate is to protect consumers and ensure that the industry operates efficiently and effectively. Bill 100 strengthens its role by mandating it to publicly review electricity plans prepared by the Ontario Power Authority and market rules prepared by the IESO. It's a venue for stakeholder and public involvement in the energy sector.

With regard to electricity rates, the OEB would approve an annual rate plan for low-volume and other smaller consumers. These consumers would pay a blended price. It would be based on regulated contract and forecasted competitive prices. This will ensure that prices are fair, stable and predictable, something this province desperately needs to generate new electricity.

M. Lalonde: Merci, monsieur le ministre, de m'avoir donné les grandes lignes du rôle que jouera la commission.

Minister, Ontario now has about 31,000 megawatts in generation capacity. Between now and 2020, over 80% of Ontario's current electricity generating capacity, which represents 25,000 megawatts, needs to be refurbished, conserved or replaced. Given the reality that previous governments failed to plan ahead and built very little new capacity over the past 10 years, under the proposed legislation what will the government do to ensure that Ontario's energy supply is enough to keep pace with our population and economic growth?

Hon Mr Duncan: The member is quite right. Until the introduction of Bill 100, there was no existing institution responsible for ensuring that we have enough electricity to keep the lights on in Ontario. That was

something ignored by the Conservatives, something ignored by the NDP. Bill 100 proposes to create a new institution, the Ontario Power Authority. It would be responsible for ensuring long-term energy supply and adequacy. Its role will be to ensure that 20 years from now this province has adequate, affordable power that will enable us to grow and prosper economically, as we have done under the first year of change in Ontario in the McGuinty government.

These changes, coupled with the economic management of this government, mean real change that means more jobs, better jobs, protection for the people of this province and ultimately better health care and better education, change that we're delivering every day of this mandate and change that we as a government are very proud of.

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Minister of Health. I would like to follow up on a question put by my colleague from Leeds-Grenville to the Premier which the Premier refused to answer.

Minister, you are the same minister who's threatening to take hospital administrators to the woodshed for mis-spending money, for spending money where you don't feel it's appropriate, and yet with regard to the hiring of Elinor Caplan, this all-in-the-family type of contract issue, you have taken the same kind of hiring practice that you condemned when you were in opposition.

I want to make it very clear that I don't call into question Ms Caplan's competence. What I am calling into question, however, is your own competency and judgment. First of all, this was an untendered contract worth some \$500,000, out of which Ms Caplan is being paid the equivalent of \$140,000 a year.

Mr Minister, how do you justify taking administrators from hospitals to issue about the misspending of money when you can make this kind of expenditure without breaking—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you. The Minister of Health.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Firstly, I'd like to thank the member from—what's his riding called?—two-tier for his question.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Smitherman: That wound may not yet be healed. That two-tier wound may not yet be healed over there. I'll stay away from that line. I'm sorry. I apologize for the sensitivity.

I want to say to the honourable member that, firstly, with respect to the CEOs of Ontario hospitals, they continue to be in our province among the most highly accomplished public officials, and we're very grateful for the work that they do every single day. I have so many opportunities to address that to them personally, and I appreciate one further opportunity.

With respect to value for money, I'll just remind the honourable member that he was a part of the government that was very pleased to pay the Minister of Health's communications adviser \$300,000, which is, on an annual basis, some quite extraordinary amount of money.

Mr Klees: This minister still fails to understand he is now the minister, that they are now the government. What we're talking about here is the issue of competency and trustworthiness. The fact is they promised that they would do things differently. The fact is they're not. In fact, what they are doing is calling into question the very principles that this Premier said he would bring to this government, and that's transparency. All I'm saying is, be transparent. The Premier refused to say that he would bring this contract before the committee for review. What is so difficult about that?

With regard to the minister, he's refused to answer my question: Why did you not tender this contract? Simple.

Hon Mr Smitherman: I'm pleased, by way of continuance from my earlier answer, to remind the honourable member that we're the party that has reappointed 279 Tories to a variety of boards. The fact of the matter is, I find it interesting—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Hon Mr Smitherman: On the matter that the honourable member asked about with respect to transparency, at the media event where we announced Ms Caplan's appointment, a question was asked directly from the media: How much will this cost, and what is Ms Caplan being paid?

The questions were answered in a very clear fashion. The total cost for this expedited review, which will last no longer than six months, to address what for many people in our province is a very pressing challenge, will be no more than \$500,000. On a \$1.3-billion line item in our government's budget, we feel that's an appropriate expenditure.

Further, as I would look to find people of accomplishment to assist me with difficult challenges, I am enormously pleased that someone of Ms Caplan's extraordinary capabilities and relevance as a former health minister and a parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Health in Ottawa—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Minister of Health.

Minister, your ministry recently approved a request from the Sudbury Regional Hospital to discharge and transfer long-term-care patients outside our region. This is because there are no long-term-care beds available in our communities. So up to about 20 patients are going to end up going to Manitoulin Island, Espanola and, indeed, even to Chappleau.

We've been contacted by many family members who are very concerned, because they're already going to the

hospital every day to provide additional support. This, of course, is going to be impossible when these patients are discharged and relocated so far from home.

The media reported last week that about 3,700 new long-term-care beds will be allocated this year, but none are coming to Sudbury. I'm asking you, Minister, if you would immediately review this situation to determine if, indeed, some of those long-term-care beds can be allocated to Sudbury so this difficult situation doesn't become a permanent situation.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I do want to thank the member for the question. The member from Sudbury has also been very clear in advocating on behalf of the needs of his constituents.

Let me make very clear that the situation with respect to those discharge policies is a very challenging one. For those families, I recognize that it's a long distance from Sudbury to Manitoulin Island and other environments, and I want to say that we recognize that this is a policy that can only be put in place in extraordinary circumstances. What are the extraordinary circumstances? There are two points.

1530

The first is that if we do not have these discharge policies, the Sudbury hospital will not function properly and it will back up and cause even more challenges. It is a request that's being made of those families. I recognize that it's a difficult one but it is necessary to try to maintain proper functioning of the health care system. The challenge we have in northern Ontario is that in Timmins we had this problem in July. I think it's quite possible that some of the beds in Sudbury are occupied by people from Timmins who have also been subjected to this.

I'll have more information for the honourable member in the second supplementary.

Ms Martel: My question was about an immediate review of the long-term-care bed allocation. I hope the minister is going to respond to that because there may be some beds that could come to Sudbury. I understand that's not an immediate solution, but it might stave off a very permanent problem.

There are some other measures that I am going to ask you to implement, measures that you actually implemented in Timmins-James Bay that did keep some of these people from having to go to Iroquois Falls, Hearst and other places. Those measures include establishing temporary long-term-care beds in existing facilities in Sudbury; establishing temporary long-term-care beds at the Sudbury Regional Hospital; providing additional funds for palliative care so that people could be cared for at home and not in the hospital; and finally, some additional resources to community-based agencies to do assessments earlier on the advice, for example, of a physician who sees a caregiver who is going to burn out, which is going to result in an immediate admission to the hospital.

Are you prepared, Minister, to do the review, as I asked in the earlier question, and also to implement those

four measures that you did implement earlier this summer in Timmins-James Bay?

Hon Mr Smitherman: We did implement some of those measures in Timmins-James Bay. Perhaps you said that. I'm sorry; I misspoke.

To the member I'll say that yes, generally speaking there's a lot there. In our allocation of long-term care last week we have included funding for 500 temporary alternate-level-of-care beds. That's exactly what's to be applied in the circumstance the member has at hand.

The bigger issue we have is a northern Ontario challenge. It's a problem in Timmins, it's a problem in Thunder Bay and it's now most certainly a problem in Sudbury. The previous government's allocations have not been adequate to meet the needs of people in northern Ontario who have very serious underlying health conditions—lack of caregivers, in some instances. We have already increased the funding that will give more access to palliative care and other strategies through community-based agencies.

On the central matter at hand, which is short-term allocation to deal with the problem, this is something that the ministry is currently examining. Longer-term allocation is of course the priority that we're making to resolve this issue, not on a temporary basis but on a more permanent one.

In the meantime, I do again want to say to the honourable member, and to those families that are disadvantaged as a result of this, that we are asking a lot of them, and we're very appreciative of the efforts they're going to be asked to make for the proper functioning of the health care system.

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Mr Tony C. Wong (Markham): My question is directed to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Minister, last week I attended a fundraiser in Markham for a local group called Spirit of Life. Working with other community leaders in Markham, I helped to create this group several months ago.

Spirit of Life was established to raise awareness about the needs of individuals with visible and invisible disabilities, to eliminate barriers and to improve the quality of life for individuals with special needs. Simple things that most of us take for granted, like going to work or grocery shopping, become difficult tasks for 1.5 million Ontarians with a visible or invisible disability. I believe that all Ontarians should have the opportunity to learn, work, play and otherwise participate in society to their fullest potential. Unfortunately, many continue to be left behind.

My question is, how will the new Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act improve life for Ontarians who suffer from visible and invisible disabilities?

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): The member summarized very well what

we heard across the province from people with disabilities, visible and invisible.

First, this legislation will cover both visible and invisible disabilities, which is a major step forward. The second is that we will have standards.

What we heard across the province was, "What are the rules?" Businesses asked us, "We would follow the rules if we knew what they were; what are the rules? What should we be doing to help people have accessibility to our business?" The business sector will be right there at the sector tables developing those mandatory standards that will allow people to go to restaurants and cinemas more freely and to do everything that we take for granted.

As well, there's a lot of discrimination presently in the employment sector against those with invisible or mental health disabilities. Those are the standards that will take longer to develop—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you.

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: —because public education needs to be part of that. I'll continue in the supplementary.

Mr Wong: With the changing demographics, we all know that tomorrow's workplace and marketplace will look and function very differently from today. With an aging population, 20% of Ontarians are likely to be persons with a disability by 2025. This group represents an estimated spending power of about \$25 billion a year across Canada. Doing nothing hurts everybody, both businesses and individuals. Minister, how will the new act assist businesses to prepare for the special needs of this significant consumer group?

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: Indeed, we can't afford not to act. The honourable member is correct. One in five of us will have a disability in 20 years, largely due to the fact that we are aging. The baby boomers never were satisfied with the status quo, to their credit, and they won't be in 20 years either.

One of the ways we will be assisting businesses is by having flexibility. We will not be expecting the same sort of standards for a corner store that is struggling as compared to a Loblaws or a Sobeys, which of course will have more resources for developing standards.

The bottom line is this: that every person with a disability, whether it's invisible or visible, has a right to attend cinemas, to buy milk at the corner store, to go to hotels and other hospitalities.

In the United States, by increasing accessibility, the tourism industry raised revenues by 12%. We have a great opportunity here to raise revenues in our province, at the same time doing the right thing in giving the accessibility to Ontarians with disabilities that they deserve.

MINISTERS' INTEGRITY

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): I had intended to ask this question to the Minister of Health, but rather, I will put it directly to the Premier.

Premier, earlier in question period you were asked whether you thought it was appropriate to have a Liberal political staffer, paid for by the taxpayers, in charge of stakeholder relations, someone who is in essence the gatekeeper to public appointments for the Minister of Health, at 4:30 being the gatekeeper and at 5:30 shaking people down to buy tickets to Liberal Party fundraisers. I want to ask you very clearly, do you think that type of behaviour reaches the ethical standards in Dalton McGuinty's government?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Again, if there are some specifics that the member would like to provide me or possibly the Integrity Commissioner with, I would be delighted to entertain those. But I can say once again that this individual is not employed by the Ministry of Health. I also understand that he never served in this capacity, as manager of stakeholder relations.

Mr Baird: I listened with great interest when you answered the question of the Leader of the Opposition at prompting from the Minister of Health. In fact, this individual was on June 30 e-mailing people in the health care community, shaking them down for political contributions to the Ontario Liberal Party, and in fact didn't leave office—what the minister didn't tell you is that they didn't leave his employ until September 3 of this past year. So what he was doing was that at 4:30 he was the community liaison, an assistant in your political minister's office, being the gatekeeper, giving out public appointments and being the gatekeeper for that process. At 4:30 he was doing that, while at 5:30 he was shaking down members of the health care community for donations to the Ontario Liberal Party.

I want to ask you very clearly, do you have standards that you will stand in your place and tell your cabinet what your ethical bottom line is? Yes or no, Minister.

Hon Mr McGuinty: Yes, we have standards, and yes, they are much higher than those set by our predecessor government.

HOME CARE

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Minister of Health. Mr Minister, you promised during the last election, and indeed since the last election, to improve home care services. I have to tell you that we in East York do not see much happening in that way.

Just in this past couple of weeks we have seen that our treasured community-based not-for-profit agency, Community Care East York, has been nudged out by a multinational company because the bidding process was flawed. You have admitted that the bidding process is flawed. You have hired people to study that process. Why will you not include Community Care East York and perhaps the Ottawa VON in that study and remedy something which is very wrong?

1540

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The honourable member asks me to

seek a remedy which is to reach back into a legally constituted process and change it because the outcome didn't satisfy him or some members of his community. I think it's important to note that we do have concerns about the competitive bidding process as it relates to the community care access centres and provision of long-term care. That's why we've taken the actions that we have. But for the member to suggest that we have the power to retroactively reach in and change those outcomes I think is inappropriate.

Further, in many of these very same processes, including the one in Ottawa, the big winners, if you will, of those contracts that were tendered are in fact not-for-profit organizations. So I think the member should be careful in suggesting that it's for-profit providers that have won out in instances over those that are not-for-profit.

Our concern in taking on this review of the process by Elinor Caplan is that it is designed to create stronger levels of continuity of care for both patients and providers, because we have been concerned about the upheaval the process has been causing to date.

I just want to say to the member with respect to the situation in East York and some other places that he might have referenced, of course we have no power to reach in arbitrarily and change decisions that were arrived at in a legal process.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Supplementary.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I'm going to tell you right now that you'd better find a way to reach back in and fix the mess you've made in my community of East York. It is unacceptable. The review of how contracts are being awarded is too late for our constituents in East York. You ran on "Choose change," but you did not stop the cutthroat Tory process that gives contracts to for-profit outfits rather than proven, non-profit community-based home care providers like Community Care East York. These residents are set to lose the home care workers that they let into their homes and that they know and trust. I'm going to ask you to fix this. Will you make the review retroactive to January so that Community Care East York and providers like the VON and others can continue to deliver the excellent home care services they provide to my constituents in East York?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I believe I've already answered that part of the member's question. I will take this opportunity to mention that what we are doing is building a system that will work even better in the future. The fact of the matter is that we put \$103 million in additional funding into home care this year and it is providing extraordinary new benefits to people. In fact, over the four-year mandate we've already indicated that funding will be increasing and an additional 96,000 people will benefit from home care, the kind of care that's delivered right in their home. I believe we can improve this process and make it better from the standpoint of continuity of care for workers and patients alike, and that's the path we're on right now.

The Speaker: That brings us to the end of question period.

PETITIONS

WATERLOO-WELLINGTON TRANSPORTATION ACTION PLAN

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the residents of Waterloo-Wellington need and deserve excellent roads and highways for their safe travel; and

"Whereas good transportation links are vital to the strength of our local economy, supporting job creation through the efficient delivery of our products to the North American marketplace; and

"Whereas transit services are essential to managing the future growth of our urban communities and have a relatively minimal impact on our natural environment; and

"Whereas Waterloo-Wellington MPP Ted Arnott has asked all municipalities in Waterloo-Wellington to provide him with their top transportation priorities for the next five years and beyond, all of them responded, and their recommendations form the Waterloo-Wellington transportation action plan; and

"Whereas the Waterloo-Wellington transportation action plan contains over 40 recommendations provided to MPP Ted Arnott by municipalities, and there is recurrent support for implementing the corridor study of Highway 7/8 between Kitchener and Stratford, a new four-lane Highway 7 from Kitchener to Guelph, assistance for Wellington county to rebuild Highway 24 from Guelph to Cambridge, a repaired and upgraded Highway 6 from Fergus to Mount Forest, Waterloo region's light rail transit initiative, OSTAR funding for transportation-related projects, and other projects;

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

"That the provincial government support Ted Arnott's Waterloo-Wellington transportation action plan, and initiate the necessary studies and/or construction of the projects in it."

I have affixed my signature as well to this petition.

OPTOMETRISTS

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I've got a petition to the Ontario Legislature.

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario will be considering a private member's bill that aims to amend the Optometry Act to give optometrists the authority to prescribe therapeutic pharmaceutical agents for the treatment of certain eye diseases; and

“Whereas optometrists are highly trained and equipped with the knowledge and specialized instrumentation needed to effectively diagnose and treat certain eye problems; and

“Whereas extending the authority to prescribe TPAs to optometrists will help relieve the demands on ophthalmologists and physicians who currently have the exclusive domain for prescribing TPAs to optometry patients; and

“Whereas the bill introduced by New Democrat Peter Kormos ... will ensure that patients receive prompt, timely, one-stop care where appropriate;

“Therefore, I do support the bill proposing an amendment to the Optometry Act to give optometrists the authority to prescribe therapeutic pharmaceutical agents for the treatment of certain eye diseases and I urge the government of Ontario to ensure speedy passage of the bill.”

It's signed by hundreds. I've affixed my signature as well. Page Anthony is taking this to the Clerk.

EYE EXAMINATIONS

Mr Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to present this petition on behalf of my riding of Niagara Falls.

“Whereas the 2004 provincial budget was not clear on whether adult optometry patients who have or who are at risk for medical conditions, such as diabetes, glaucoma, macular degeneration and clinically significant cataracts would continue to be covered through the Ontario Health Insurance Plan; and

“Whereas Ontario's optometrists strongly feel that Ontario seniors, those under 20 and those with chronic sight-threatening diseases must continue to receive primary eye care services directly from Ontario's optometrists; and

“Whereas forcing patients to be referred to optometrists through their family physicians ignores the years of specialized training optometrists undertake to detect, diagnose and treat eye conditions; and

“Whereas almost 140 communities across the province have already been designated as underserved for family practitioners and the government's approach will only exacerbate the problem unnecessarily;

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

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care immediately clarify that the eye examination services they provide to patients at risk for medical conditions will continue to be covered by OHIP and the coverage for these services is not dependent on a patient being referred to an optometrist by a family physician.”

I'm pleased to submit that with my signature attached.

KINGSTON STOCKYARDS

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition here signed by a great number of residents of Ontario.

“Whereas the Canadian (and Ontario) beef industry has been in turmoil since the spring of 2003 when an isolated case of BSE (which did not reach the food chain) was reported in Alberta resulting in the closure of the US border to Canadian beef exports; and

“Whereas since that time losses to farmers and their related suppliers such as livestock markets have been in the billions of dollars; and

“Whereas there is no immediate solution for the problem, which would cure the economic tragedy and stabilize the economics of the industry and its suppliers; and

“Whereas livestock markets in Ontario are in imminent danger of being closed, and in fact one of Ontario's major markets for two generations, Lindsay Sale Barn, has in fact closed its doors as of September 2004; and

“Whereas farmers who are already devastated by the evolution of this crisis to date need community livestock sales in order to have a place to sell their stock; and

“Whereas the Kingston community stockyards—the only remaining livestock market between Ottawa and Campbellford—is in immediate danger of closing for good, creating significant hardship for both the operators and the farming community who require this sale;

“Be it resolved, therefore, that we, the supporters of the Kingston Stockyards, hereby petition the Legislature to provide immediate financial relief for this facility through this crisis so that it can continue to serve the community.”

I add my signature to it, as I totally agree with it.

HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition sent to me by Mr Maurice Lalonde of Whitefish, Ontario—it's in my riding—and I thank him for it. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government is cutting provincial funding for essential health care services like optometry, physiotherapy and chiropractic care;

“Whereas this privatization of health care services will force Ontarians to pay out of pocket for essential health care;

“Whereas Ontarians already pay for health care through their taxes and will be forced to pay even more through the government's new regressive health tax;

“Whereas the Liberals promised during the election that they would not cut or privatize health care services in Ontario;

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

“We demand the McGuinty Liberal government keep its promises and guarantee adequate provincial funding for critical health services like eye, physiotherapy and chiropractic care.”

I agree with the petitioners.

1550

GO TRANSIT SERVICE

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly from the Lisgar Residents' Association at their most recent annual general meeting.

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

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

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

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

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

As one of those Lisgar residents, I'm pleased to affix my name.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need; and

"Whereas those with reduced ability to pay, including seniors, low-income families and the working poor, will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments; and

"Whereas the elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures in chiropractic treatment and cost the government over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"Whereas there was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP

coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I have several hundred petitions, and I'm pleased to sign my name.

LANDFILL

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): [Inaudible] site 41 is still a battle.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I'm pleased to sign my name to this.

OPTOMETRISTS

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition that has been sent to me by the Ontario optometrists' association. 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 that 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 Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care resume negotiations immediately with the OAO and appoint a mediator to help with the negotiation process in order to ensure that optometrists can continue to provide quality eye care services to patients in Ontario."

I agree with the petitioners and I've signed my signature to this.

GOVERNMENT DEFICITS

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

"Whereas the Dalton McGuinty government inherited a fiscal mess in the province of Ontario;

"Whereas the government undertook an unprecedented budget consultation with the people of Ontario;

"Whereas tough choices and small sacrifices need to be made today for a stronger Ontario tomorrow; and

"Whereas the Minister of Finance and the Dalton McGuinty government tabled a responsible four-year plan to address this deficit, improve health care and education, inspire economic growth and balance the budget;

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

"To support the Dalton McGuinty government's responsible four-year plan and to support legislation that ensures outgoing governments cannot hide deficits again."

I've affixed my signature to this petition.

LESLIE M. FROST CENTRE

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a large number of petitions to reopen the Leslie M. Frost Centre.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Leslie M. Frost Centre has been Ontario's leading natural resources education, training and conference centre aimed at fostering an understanding of natural resource management, with a focus on ecosystems and their sustainability for future generations; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government refused to consult with municipalities and other user groups before taking this drastic action and continues to operate in a clandestine manner; and

"Whereas this move will hurt the people and economies of Muskoka and Haliburton, especially those in the local tourism industry; and

"Whereas the Frost Centre is a valuable resource for elementary, secondary, post-secondary institutions, as well as a variety of other groups;

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

"That the McGuinty government reverse the decision to close the Leslie M. Frost Centre, allowing valuable summer programs to continue while a long-term solution is developed."

I support this petition.

HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition that's been signed by many hundreds of residents in my riding and the Sudbury riding. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government is cutting provincial funding for essential health care services like optometry, physiotherapy and chiropractic care;

"Whereas this privatization of health care services will force Ontarians to pay out-of-pocket for essential health care;

"Whereas Ontarians already pay for health care through their taxes and will be forced to pay even more through the government's new regressive health tax;

"Whereas the Liberals promised during the election that they would not cut or privatize health care services in Ontario;

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

"We demand the McGuinty Liberal government keep its promises and guarantee adequate provincial funding for critical health services like eye, physiotherapy and chiropractic care."

I agree with the petitioners and I've affixed my signature to this.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I have a petition regarding access to trades and professions in Ontario. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

"Whereas Ontario, its businesses, its people and its institutions badly need the professional, managerial and

technical skills that many newcomers to Canada have and want to use;

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

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

1600

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET MEASURES ACT, 2004 (NO. 2)

LOI DE 2004

SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES (N^O 2)

Mr Sorbara moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 106, An Act to implement Budget measures and amend the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, 1994 / Projet de loi 106, Loi mettant en oeuvre certaines mesures budgétaires et modifiant la Loi de 1994 sur la durabilité des forêts de la Couronne.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Minister?

Applause.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): That’s very kind of you.

It’s an honour and a privilege to be the first speaker as we resume sitting in this Legislature on this gorgeous, marvellous fall afternoon.

I should say that I am going to be sharing my time on this bill with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Eglinton-Lawrence, who is noted for being an outstanding advocate on a variety of things. He may be talking about mortgage broker stuff—it’s one of the things he’s working on—but I’ll leave that up to him.

Before I get to the substance of the bill, I thought I might just welcome the member from Whitby-Ajax as the critic in his party for things relating to finance and to congratulate him on his contesting, once again, the leadership of his party. He and I disagree fundamentally on political philosophies and approaches to ensuring the vibrancy of Ontario and the flourishing of its economy. But I want to say to him, in all sincerity, that I’ve contested a leadership, and it is exhilarating and it is exhausting. That he would, over the course of less than two years, I think, contest the leadership of his party twice I think is a statement of his dedication to his own party and to the province as a whole. That’s the last nice thing I’m going to say about him, OK? That’s it. Now the gloves are off.

By the way, although he’s not here, my own MPP, the member from Oak Ridges, was a contestant there as well. I got to listen to all of his speech the night of the convention and I thought he spoke eloquently. I have no idea why he’s out there advocating a two-tier health care system, which would not only cost the people of Ontario more money for their health care but significantly reduce the quality of health care for the vast majority of the population who cannot afford to pay the kinds of bills that he’s advocating. But those are politics that belong to the member from Oak Ridges and the member from Whitby-Ajax and that party.

While I’m at it, I want to welcome John Tory as the leader of the party. He’s the invisible presence in this chamber. The question that we’re all betting on is, who is going to resign to make room for Mr Tory to contest a seat in this Legislature? I want to end any rumour that it’s going to be Michael Prue of the NDP. I don’t know who started that rumour, but surely that can’t be true.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Sorbara: If you haven’t heard one by noon—

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I heard otherwise.

Hon Mr Sorbara: OK, there you go. I think my friend from Sudbury knows what’s behind that story.

I would like to say a few things about what has happened in Ontario during the period when this House was not sitting. It has been, in some sense, a tremendous summer—certainly economically. The economy has been very strong in Ontario. We are still looking for a next level of achievement in tourism. We’re still not happy with the number of visitors we’re getting, particularly from south of the border, and we’re working on those initiatives. I want to send out a general welcome. It’s beautiful in Ontario this fall. Come and see us, come and join us, come and celebrate with us.

Within that, I want to say a few words about the other part of the summer, in particular about the tragedies associated with the flooding in Peterborough on July 15. The member from Peterborough is sitting directly behind me. I’m sure he’ll have an opportunity in this Legislature to speak about that and the real-life stories of people who basically lost everything and the extent to which nature just ravaged that community so severely.

I must tell you that I was incredibly proud of how quickly our government was able to respond to the needs of the people of Peterborough and the surrounding area. To me, it was one of the proudest moments of the summer. I don’t want to embarrass my friend from Peterborough, but part of the quickness of that response was his advocacy to our government and our caucus that this was not a time to study and this was not a time to do accounting; this was a time that the people of his community needed help from their provincial government. He did it eloquently, he did it forcefully and he did it successfully. I think it stands as a measure of emergency response from now on in this province and, indeed, in this country.

I want to say a word as well about one of the major meetings of the summer, the AMO meeting, the

Association of Municipalities of Ontario, and the way in which a new level of co-operation really has been developed between municipalities and the provincial government. In fact, the convention really wound up with an accountability session. I think there were some 10 or 12 ministers from our government there to answer questions from a variety of municipal leaders.

What was really touching to me was the conversations after the accountability session from municipal officials elected from right across Ontario, the same refrain, and that was, "There is a new era of co-operation and consideration in this province." The era of confrontation, the era of name-calling, the era of "you said/he said/she said/they said" is over. I hope we can continue that approach, to work in partnership with our municipal partners to build a stronger Ontario, right from communities in the very far north down to Windsor, over to Kingston, to Cornwall and right across this great province.

The other thing that I think is really of note during the summer is the events that took place in Ottawa from September 13 to 15 in the health care summit that the Prime Minister called, bringing all provinces and territories together to work out what he was suggesting needed to be the deal for a decade in health care.

I had the opportunity and the honour of participating in that meeting during the course of the three days and to offer what little advice might be helpful to the Premier. I don't need to go into the details of the agreement. People describe it as an \$18-billion deal over six years that will transform health care. I should tell you that, beyond the actual figures and the numbers—because it doesn't fix everything in Ontario—what was really important about that health care summit, what stands out beyond everything else, is that it represented this country coming together once again to reconfirm its profound commitment to a universal, publicly funded health care system from sea to sea to sea. That's really what happened. All the naysayers, people like my friend from Oak Ridges, who say, "It can't work any more. We need private health care. We need a US model. We need a Soviet model. We need some other model," were all proven wrong by what happened in Ottawa among the leaders of governments in Canada, not only agreeing upon the financial details of a deal but reconfirming our collective commitment to a system based on need and not based on wealth.

I want to tell you how incredibly proud I was of the work our Premier, the member from Ottawa South, Dalton McGuinty, did, the role he played in those negotiations. They were not easy. When the going really got rough—and I was there, so I can testify to this—it was the Premier of Ontario who kept tempers down and kept Premiers and the Prime Minister around the table. When it would have been politically easy for people to bolt and say, "We just can't do a deal here," it was the Premier of Ontario, understanding that this was a matter of urgent national interest, who got people to keep talking. Some of those meetings went on well into the

night. I should tell you how proud I was that officials from my own ministry, the Ministry of Finance, were there to do all the number-crunching and to do a careful analysis of the proposals that various participants in the conference were putting forward. The work of officials from my ministry deserves recognition and deserves to be honoured. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate them. But that health care deal really represents a new and deeper commitment to the thing that binds us all together as Canadians, and that is a universal health care system.

I do want to say a word about the details in Bill 106. Obviously, the bill is pretty simple and straightforward. The major part of it deals with the implementation of the Ontario health premium, certainly—no doubt, no argument—the most controversial part of the budget that we as a government brought forward on May 18.

1610

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): No doubt about that.

Hon Mr Sorbara: There's my friend from the east end of Toronto, Toronto-Danforth. It's good to see an NDP member here, though, and more; it's great. They're coming in for the heart of the speech, no doubt the most controversial part of the budget. I want to tell you, Speaker, and the members of this House that we did not take lightly the decision to introduce the Ontario health premium as a specialized tax in Ontario to help us pay for the cost of health care in this great province. I want to put on the record here, to my friend for Toronto-Danforth, that the alternative was to say, "Okay, we said that there would be absolutely no new taxes; we won't do this, so we will allow Ontario to continue down the debt spiral that the previous government left us with when they left power on October 23." That was simply not acceptable.

Ms Churley: Gerry Phillips knew there was a deficit of over \$5 billion.

Hon Mr Sorbara: I tell my friend from Toronto-Danforth that she will have her turn in this debate, I hope, because I'm always impressed with her analysis of public issues. I rarely agree with her but I'm impressed with the work she puts into it.

That health care premium represents the revenues that will help us bring new stability to the balance sheet of this province. There's no doubt it would have been easier in some respects to say, "You know what? We won't bring in the premium, so we have to start cutting services and closing schools; can't keep the promises in education, in health care or in public transportation." That's what the NDP would want and certainly that's what the Conservatives would want.

But what the people of Ontario elected us to do, and what we have done over the past year, is to start to transform for the better the public services in this province. Bill 106 gives us the opportunity to further that agenda by way of revenues that, as we said when we introduced the bill, will be dedicated exclusively and entirely to improving the health care system. We've already gone down that road with more nurses and with

improvements already to home care. We are starting to transform the delivery of primary care and we are starting to transform the way in which people access our health care system. Bill 106 gives us the resources we need to do that.

In closing, I want to say to you that I hope you've had a good summer. I know from chatting with many of the members around this Legislature that they have heard the same refrain no matter where they are reporting from around the province, that we're starting to feel the real, positive benefits of the real, positive changes that the people of Ontario expected from this government and are now getting.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. I recognize the member for Eglinton-Lawrence.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): It's my honour to follow the Minister of Finance in regard to the debate on Bill 106. I would like to continue on some of the comments the minister made.

I certainly want to congratulate all the people in Peterborough who over the summer witnessed an amazing act of climate change that was considered a 300-year storm. It's bad enough that they had a 100-year storm two years earlier; this time they had a 300-year storm. I think it's a credit to the leadership of the local Peterborough council, Mayor Sutherland, all the citizens of Peterborough, the Peterborough BIA and our own colleague here, Jeff Leal, the member from Peterborough, who really quietly and in a very sure-handed way took care of an extremely complex and challenging situation. I think all of Ontario would like to appreciate the good work that was done during that most trying period on July 15 in the city of Peterborough.

Also, the minister mentioned that an integral part of Ontario's economic growth and stability depends on tourism. I see my colleague from Muskoka sitting here. I think it's critically important for Ontarians to talk about the wonderful, spectacular and absolutely beautiful colours that we can see throughout Ontario, especially this week and next week. Somebody mentioned that Manitoulin is spectacular, Muskoka, the Agawa Canyon and up in Simcoe; you can go to almost any corner of this great province and see the amazing cornucopia of colours that is not matched, I think, virtually anywhere in North America. I think we Ontarians sometimes don't blow our own horn enough or boost our province and its spectacular natural beauty enough. I think if we tend to appreciate the natural beauty of this province, it will not only encourage Ontarians to vacation and travel throughout Ontario but will also encourage people from the nearby states to the south to come to Ontario and enjoy a wonderful view of these spectacular exhibits and colours of nature. Anybody who wants to do something worthwhile with their children this weekend, and with seniors, what better way but to spend a weekend or a day driving in one of those beautiful parts of Ontario: Agawa Canyon, Manitoulin, the Bruce Trail; anywhere you go there is a spectacular exhibiting of nature's mysteries and glory.

The minister talked about what went on this summer. We had the Peterborough flood. Also, I was interested to travel through parts of northern Ontario that are rarely talked about—the James Bay basin, where we had public hearings on the First Nations revenue-sharing bill put forward by the member from James Bay, Mr Gilles Bisson. It's interesting to see another part of Ontario which is, again, sometimes unheralded, like Pickle Lake, where they say there's some of the best fishing. I only caught a small, three-pound pike.

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): It's that big.

Mr Colle: How big was that pike in Pickle Lake? It's the biggest fish I've caught in my life. That's all I can say. I think it was about this big, and the member from Muskoka is my witness. But whether it's Pickle Lake or Sioux Lookout, which is a really interesting communications hub—the Chairman, our good friend here from Chatham-Kent, Mr Hoy, was there. We visited Attawapiskat, which is a very fascinating First Nations community. We also went to Moose Factory, which has an incredible place called the Ecolodge. The whole economy of Moose Factory and Moosonee and that area depends on people coming there from all over the world. They come to see the polar bears and they come to see the spectacular part of the province in Moosonee and Moose Factory.

1620

Interjections.

Mr Colle: I know the members opposite sometimes don't put any value on that part of Ontario. But I, as a member from Toronto, appreciate the fact that it's all the component parts of Ontario that make Ontario's economy strong. Ontario's economy cannot be strong with just Toronto's economy doing well by itself. We have to have a strong economy in Moose Factory, we have to have a strong economy in Nepean, we have to have a strong economy in Chatham-Kent and Cornwall, from east to west.

That's why this budget—and Bill 106 is part of that budget—paid a lot of attention to northern Ontario and tried to explain in budgetary fashion the fact that we have to invest in all of Ontario for Ontario to create jobs and opportunities for young people.

That's what budget Bill 106 is really all about. It is part of a comprehensive plan to ensure that there's enough investment in this great province so that there is continued job creation, continued investment in health care, continued investment in education, continued investment in our urban and rural infrastructure. This kind of investment cannot take place unless there are tough decisions made in a budget. As we all know, we made some very difficult decisions, as all previous governments have made when it comes to a budget. Budgets are not easy, because you essentially have to say no to certain demands, and on the other hand, you have to make tough choices.

We introduced the health premium. The health premium was an attempt to say very plainly to the people

of Ontario that it isn't just going to go on, business as usual, in terms of funding health care. Health care in Ontario is really in the dynamics of a supply-and-demand situation that requires extraordinary attention. I know the Minister of Health is giving it extraordinary attention, and so is the Minister of Finance, because now health is essentially half of the provincial budget and growing at about 7% to 8% a year and more. The cost of drugs is growing at almost 15% a year.

Over and over again we hear the reference to the baby boomers and the blip coming, where by the year 2020 the impact on health is even going to be double what it is today by the growing number of baby boomers who will make up more and more of the senior population. So in this budget we tried to address that need, saying, "You need more revenues to provide essential health services and to meet the demand that's prevalent in every community," whether it's in the city of Vaughan, where they're looking for a new hospital, or whether it's in Brampton, where they're looking for a new hospital, or whether they need more cardiac care in hospitals in Chatham-Kent.

This budget tries to say that with this health premium we're able to invest in some of those critical services: cardiac procedures, chemotherapy. Which one of us has not had a call from a mother or father saying they have a loved one who needs that chemotherapy speeded up, that it's not soon enough, that there's too much of a wait time? People are very anxious for their loved ones as they wait for those necessary surgeries.

In this budget, we tried to say that rather than have people wait and wait in line for hip replacements or for cardiac treatment or for cataract operations for the elderly, we are going to try to use that money from the health premiums—and it starts at about \$60 a year if you're earning about \$21,000 and works its way up, based on income, all the way to \$900 for the highest income earners. In fact, it's the only premium in Canada that's based on income. Nobody likes to pay a health premium. Nobody likes to pay taxes. We know that. But we're saying that the choices are pretty stark. Do we tell the people waiting for cardiac procedures, "Wait for that bypass another three or four months"? Do we tell that person waiting for the cataract operation, a senior, "Wait another year"? Most of us said we can't keep telling people to wait, that as people wait, they get sicker, costing the health system even more. That's why the resources from the health premium will also go into what Minister Smitherman talks about in this transformation approach to health care. In other words, we're not just going to continue to write cheques to the hospitals, we're not going to continue to write cheques to the doctors or cheques to the pharmaceuticals. We're saying we have to start to transform health care investment in the province of Ontario. In other words, we are going to put money into upfront investments that emphasize wellness and prevention.

That's why for the first time in a budget there are specific references to providing immunization for chil-

dren at birth so they won't get smallpox and they won't get these childhood diseases. We're putting in tens of millions of dollars into upfront immunization, saving families about \$600 a year. That's why we're saying we can't just expect the hospital to be the one-stop shopping centre for health care. That's over with. Hospitals cannot do everything for everybody in a community.

That's why the minister is saying we have to shift health care into a prevention mode, into a wellness mode, also into a community-based mode, whether it be the half a billion dollars we're putting into home care, nursing homes or the new family health teams, because in every community we hear it over and over again—in this House for the last eight years we heard it—there are not enough doctors. Whether you go to Ajax or whether you go to Chatham-Kent, certainly if you go to the north, you go to beautiful Brantford, Ontario, Paris, Ontario, wherever you go—to Leamington—they're saying there are no doctors.

Some of that health premium money will go to providing for the financing of these family health teams that will go into communities to provide an alternative to just going to a hospital for everything and work on prevention, nutritional education, lifestyle education, hiring more nurses, all these investments, so it's not always at the doctor's doorstep by himself or herself and not at the hospital emergency room's doorstep.

We have begun to think, perhaps mistakenly, that emergency rooms in hospitals are the intake centres for health care; they're not. They are places of last resort. That's why I'm a big supporter in my own riding of Eglinton-Lawrence of family community health centres. I've got the Anne Johnston centre on Yonge Street. I've got the Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre in the Bathurst-Lawrence area. What they do is take the pressure off our hospitals at a much lower cost. You've got doctors on salary, you've got nutritionists, you've got dieticians, you've got nurses, you've got social workers all working in that community health centre. I think we have 50 in Ontario.

In this budget, we've increased the funding for those community health centres by \$16 million. It's the first time we've had a reinvestment in community health centres in over 10 years. That's another concrete example of the fact that it's not the status quo approach to health care. You'll hear the opposition stand up over and over again and talk about, "Well, you did this. You should have done that." They just don't get it. We can't do things as we've always done for the last 40 years in health care, because basically it will end up where we'll have one ministry. The Honourable George Smitherman will be the only minister left in this government if we continue to increase our expenditures in health care as we have over the last seven or eight years.

Interjection.

Mr Colle: Right. The member from Peterborough says there will be no money for the roads or the GO train services, no money for our schools, no money for all of our essential services, unless we start to transform health care.

The member from Ottawa Centre—I was in his riding last week—I mean, two days ago in Ottawa Centre. I was at the Parkdale market. We were talking about health. You know what I bought? I bought a giant 10-pound bag of carrots, and they actually tasted like real carrots. I know in Toronto our carrots taste like soap. But these were locally grown carrots. I bought a 10-pound bag of carrots, two heads of cauliflower and two broccolis, and they actually smelled like vegetables. The member for Ottawa Centre is a great exponent of healthy living, healthy eating, prevention, the food that you eat, the food that you don't eat. In health care, we can no longer just look upon it as, what do you do after a person gets sick? It's a sickness system. We should look at providing health and nutrition and investing in that in an upfront way through our many different partners in health care, whether it be the hospitals, family health teams or community health centres—our public health system.

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In this budget we've made a massive investment in public health. We've already forgotten, almost, what happens if you don't pay attention to public health. That's a perfect illustration of what happens if you don't invest in prevention—penny wise, pound foolish. The Minister of Health has put in a \$190-million investment in public health. Dr Sheela Basrur, one of the great heroines of SARS, is now in charge of public health in Ontario. She's going to make sure that the lessons learned from SARS and other sad events in recent history, like Walkerton, are not repeated—by investing in public health, which means prevention of illness.

That's what public health is. You prevent illness by having people on the ground: the public health nurse available to go to the schools, public health programs of immunization, visiting nurses—all this upfront investment in prevention. Eating right, whether it be the carrots or cauliflower instead of eating—people still sometimes say, "Why are you spending so much time on the junk food in school issue?" That's part of the comprehensive approach we're taking to health care.

One of my friends said the other day that one of her children drinks 10 Cokes a day and smokes to boot. What chance do we have, if a 17-year-old is drinking 10 Cokes a day and smoking, of making sure that young person ever stays healthy? By neglecting those young people, we're going to contribute to type 2 diabetes, which is exploding all over this country. Type 2 diabetes is a result of lifestyle, of the lack of good nutrition, of going to that pop machine, going to that chocolate bar machine, going to the fast food store. That's what costs our health care system billions of dollars. Those are the ways that we can bring down some of these costs. We don't have a choice, because if we want to provide prenatal care, essential chemotherapy, hip replacements and heart surgery or to have doctors in communities, we can't afford to neglect nutrition and prevention. We can't neglect public health. These parts of health care, when neglected, in the long run cost the Ministry of Finance, the taxpayers of Ontario, incredible amounts of money—billions of dollars.

The health care budget, again, is in the range of \$30 billion and counting, and it's going to eat up the hard-earned tax dollars. So the choice is very clear for all of us who are in government or those of us who live in this great province of Ontario: that we make some investments. I call them investments because they're not just spending money. That status quo, old-fashioned, out-of-date approach is gone forever. You have to put health care money in what we call investment envelopes so that we can actually restructure health care so, as I said, it becomes more of a prevention, essential services are provided, hospitals start to become not just one-stop shopping centres but become intermingled with all the different partners in the community; they're not silos by themselves.

These are all possible because we made some very difficult choices in this budget. I think most fair-minded Ontarians have told me very clearly, "We know you had to do some tough things. We know what's happening to costs. We're willing to do our part." Ontarians are generally very fair.

As I go along Eglinton Avenue in my riding, it's a pretty good slice of ordinary Ontario. Eglinton Avenue, for those who don't know, starts on the borders of marvellous Mississauga and then goes across into Etobicoke—I see the member from Etobicoke North there—by the Humber River, and then it goes into York, in the middle of the city of Toronto. It even touches upon North York. It goes through East York even, then Scarborough and toward Durham. Eglinton Avenue cuts across. It's the only major thoroughfare that cuts through all six former municipalities of Toronto. So you get a good slice of what ordinary people are doing—rich, poor, young, old. You can see it all on Eglinton Avenue. Just take the Eglinton Avenue bus one day, and you can see people of all walks of life.

They're saying, "Yes, we have jobs," and they're happy to have jobs. The economy is strong in Ontario, but it's not going to be strong by itself. It needs our steering, it needs our tutelage, to keep this economy going in the right direction. It doesn't happen automatically; it's not on automatic pilot. It takes a lot of work to keep this economy going, and that's the key: When the economy is strong, then we can invest in helping those who may be left behind. I don't think any of us, whether Conservative, NDP or Liberal, wants to leave anybody behind who needs help. That's why this budget tries to say, "We're going to try to do our best to put our hard-earned tax dollars to work to make everybody healthy as much as possible, try to change some attitudes, try to make the system more available to everybody across this great province."

When you make changes, there are a lot of people who say, "I don't like that change. I want it the old way. I want this." They're basically blocking improvements. They don't want to see improvements; they want to just go back. But we can't afford to go back.

The health care budget, 48% of the overall provincial budget—that can't continue. So we've got to find ways

to be smarter, more innovative. We've got to be partnering. This budget enables us to do it with an increased investment, primarily in health care, and that's certainly worth it as far as I'm concerned.

I want to thank everybody for listening and I hope you'll support Bill 106, which is a very straightforward attempt at saying, "Wake up, Ontario. We need to work together to transform health care so our kids and our kids' kids can have public health care—universal, first quality, open to all." That's what this budget continues to invest in, to transform and to, I think, make us stop and say that we have to appreciate what we have or we're going to lose it. We're going to have to appreciate the good things, make them better and move to a new dimension where we're starting to see some real results in getting people better health care, better doctors, better nursing care, and better home care and community care, not just in hospitals.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): It's a pleasure to rise again and welcome everybody back to the Ontario Legislature after a beautiful Thanksgiving weekend. I know it will be a difficult time for the government because there's going to be a lot of explaining to do, and obviously you're going to try the very best you can to satisfy the needs of the people of our province. I think today we began our drive and we're going to deal a lot in the next few months with integrity and honesty and all of those sorts of things, because we already know about the broken promises and that will be a natural as we go toward the year 2007.

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I want to say that I have listened with interest to both the minister and his parliamentary assistant. I think it's important to note that they are encountering a lot of the same problems that governments for many decades have encountered in the province of Ontario. It was certainly a different story when you were on this side of the House. We could go back in Hansard and pick out thousands and thousands of quotes that you made about what a terrible job the Conservatives were doing when we were over there, and of course, we'll be doing the same thing to you as we work toward the next election.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): The difference is that you merited them.

Mr Dunlop: Here is the heckling going on from the assistant Speaker.

Mr Crozier: Deputy.

Mr Dunlop: Deputy Speaker. Sorry.

But there's no question about it. We have a big challenge ahead of us in this province. Both the minister and the parliamentary assistant zeroed in on health care. I don't know how many times we sat over there and said the same thing. The challenges are monumental to maintain this type of system that Ontarians and Canadians expect in this great country. I wish the government all the best in their challenges, because there is no question that it's a big one: the shortage of doctors, the lack of funds etc. But we'll keep you accountable for that.

Ms Martel: I am pleased to make some comments in response to the speeches I heard from both the minister and his parliamentary assistant. Let me respond first to something the minister said, which is, "We have to do this because we were faced with such an enormous debt when we took office," as if the Liberals didn't know about the magnitude of that debt. It's worth reading into the record again comments made by both Gerry Phillips and Monte Kwinter before the election, before the 231 promises, about that very deficit. Here is Monte Kwinter, down in the estimates committee, the estimates for the Ministry of Finance, June 3, 2003, and he's grilling Madam Ecker about the Conservative budget. He says, "I therefore take it that there is a \$5-billion risk in the budget.... So, Minister, I say to you again, I do think your budget is high risk." Well, it certainly was. But Monte Kwinter said this on August 13, 2003, before the election: "Liberal MPP Monte Kwinter (York Centre) accused the government of hiding the fact it has a growing deficit that could reach \$5 billion."

My point is this: The Liberals, before the election, were well aware that we were looking at a \$5-billion deficit, but that didn't stop the Liberals from going out and making 231 promises to buy the election. So I'm a little hard-pressed now to accept the rather lame excuse from the minister that we have to bring in a most regressive health care premium because we didn't know the magnitude of the deficit; not true, not factually correct at all. Let's face it, this bill is all about a very regressive health care tax, a premium that your Premier said he would never bring in and a tax that he said he would never bring in. It is extremely regressive and hits modest- and middle-income families. The point is, you did have other choices, and I'll get to those in my next go-round.

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): The sparkling light that Ontarians see at the end of their fiscal tunnel is not an onrushing express freight train, as it had been under the former government, but is, rather, bright sunlight as the province of Ontario turns the corner on a dark night of deepening debt. For the first time in more than a decade, Ontarians can see a clear path to a balanced budget. By the time Ontarians pass judgment on our government in 2007, they will see their finances become self-sustaining for the first time in more than a decade and a half.

It is said in hockey that if you can skate well, then everything else is teachable, but if you're a poor skater, then no other skill matters. Similarly, if Ontario can balance its budget, then investing in Ontarians, their education, their health, and their social and economic well-being is not only possible, it is sustainable, year after year.

In Ottawa, the federal government took five long fiscal years to balance its budget after inheriting the Mulroney \$39-billion annual deficit. Now, after paying down tens of billions of dollars in debt, Ottawa can confidently put health care money on the table, knowing that it can maintain that spending year after year.

That's what Ontarians will see in the coming years: a government that will make the tough decisions to get the provincial budget balanced and then start paying down the debt so that money that now goes out in interest payments is available to make Ontario a better place to live and work. Thank you.

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): It really is interesting to listen to the government talk about the problems with funding health care. We had the Premier stand in front of a television in an ad and look into the camera and say, "I will not raise your taxes." This was when they had their calculation of the cost of all of their promises. I think their cost was something like \$5.5 billion. We find out that when they got into government and asked the finance department, "What are our promises worth?" it came back \$18 billion.

It's pretty hard to feel sorry for these people who, with open eyes, as we heard before, Gerry Phillips and Monte Kwinter, were all estimating that the deficit was going to be \$5 billion. They had open eyes as to what the problem was and they stood in front of the camera and said, "I will not raise your taxes."

We hear that south of the border now too when John Kerry, another liberal, is standing in front of the TV camera and saying, "I will not raise your taxes if you earn under \$200,000." I say a liberal is a liberal is a liberal. All of these people create havoc in our political system. How can we expect people to believe any politician when there are so many misrepresentations during campaigns? This government has nothing to be proud of in terms of their fiscal management.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes our time available for questions and comments. The member for Eglinton-Lawrence has two minutes to reply.

Mr Colle: My friend from Ottawa mentions that he likes George Bush. He also likes George Bush's \$400-billion deficit. He's one of the architects—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Excuse me, will the member take his seat. The member from Lanark-Carleton?

Mr Sterling: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I didn't mention George Bush in my speech.

The Acting Speaker: Take your seat. I'm sorry. I apologize. The member from Eglinton-Lawrence.

Mr Colle: The member from Lanark-Carleton talks about deficits. There isn't one member over there who admits to this day that there's a \$5.6-billion deficit. The only person I've heard mention it is the newly elected leader who says they were wrong and he agrees with us. I want to see them stand up and say there was a \$5.6-billion deficit. They still, to this day, don't admit it. I dare them to stand up and say that.

And for my NDP friends, do you know what really astonishes me about the NDP? They talk about the fact they knew about all this deficit and the pressures, yet the first bill we put before this House, which would roll back the corporate tax cut for the wealthiest Ontarians for over \$2 billion—guess what they did? They voted against rolling back the corporate tax cut, and the NDP voted

against rolling back private school funding. You tell me how that shakes with their philosophy. They voted for funding private schools, and they voted for a \$2.3-billion tax cut for the wealthiest Ontarians and for corporate Ontario.

Interjections.

Mr Colle: So don't tell us about consistency, my NDP friend. Why did you vote for that corporate tax cut? Why did you vote for private school funding when you knew our private schools didn't need the money? It's our public schools that need the money. Shame on you.

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The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): It is a privilege—

Interjections.

Mr Flaherty: I'll wait for the member for Eglinton-Lawrence to relax over there. That's all right. He's exercised.

It's a privilege to speak in the House this afternoon on Bill 106, which is actually a finance ministry bill, although one wouldn't know that from some of the speeches we've heard so far this afternoon in this House.

I speak, of course, as the member for Whitby-Ajax. Also, I'm honoured to be the finance critic, having served as Minister of Finance in 2001-02, when, I might add, the budget of the province of Ontario was about \$65 billion. Just three years later, this Liberal government has got the spending moving up pretty close now to \$80 billion—staggering spending increases in a short period of time. I'll have an opportunity to look at some of those spending increases, this spending spree that the Liberal government has gone on since they were elected in October 2003.

The bill itself, Bill 106, has a provision in it that many people in Ontario are now familiar with. This is the provision relating to the health levy, which the Liberals like to call a premium. We know it's not a premium, because when you pay a premium you actually get something in return. You get coverage, for example. When you pay a premium in your auto insurance, you get coverage for liability you might incur operating your motor vehicle or for injuries you might sustain operating that vehicle, under the accident benefits section. When you buy home insurance, you get coverage in case your home suffers miscellaneous types of losses or, of course, fire. You get something for your money.

In this item here, which is a tax, not a premium, one actually gets nothing. In fact, in Ontario, you get less than you had before in health care. Before, you had chiropractic coverage; before, you had optometry coverage; and before, there was quite substantial physiotherapy coverage in the province of Ontario. But now the people of the province have the opportunity to pay more and get less health care services in this province, a remarkable accomplishment by this Liberal government in its first year in office.

The preamble to the bill says, "The Income Tax Act is amended to impose a tax called the Ontario health premium. The new section 2.2 imposes the tax and the

new section 3.1 governs how it is calculated.” That’s the preamble.

You then go to section 2.2 of the bill that we’re debating, and it doesn’t say that every individual shall pay a premium. It says, “Every individual shall pay a tax”—they want to call it the Ontario health premium—“for a taxation year ending after December 31, 2003 if the individual is resident in Ontario,” and then in section 3.1, it talks about how you calculate the tax. Of course, it’s calculated like an income tax. They look at the amount of net income an individual has per year, and then they assess this tax as an income tax on that revenue—the income that the individual has.

So it looks like a tax; it’s called a tax in the bill. In fact, the issue has already come up now with some civil servants, including employees of the government of Canada. There’s a letter from the director general of the finance and human resources directorate in the House of Commons, for example, dated just September 28, 2004, less than a month ago, in which he deals with numerous inquiries received regarding the Ontario health premium introduced in the Ontario budget on May 18, 2004. I’m going to clarify it for the thousands and thousands of people who are in the federal employment. It says, in part, and I’ll just read a little bit of it:

“It appears that many individuals are relating the OHP to the Ontario government’s former Ontario Health Insurance Plan ... thus creating the confusion. The OHP is not a health insurance plan but rather a personal income tax payable on all taxable income. The Ontario government calls it a premium however it is deducted as income tax and reported on employee pay stubs and T4s as income tax. All employees working in the province of Ontario are subject to the OHP tax regardless of the employee’s province of residence because income tax at source is based on the employee’s province of employment,” and so on.

So we have a new tax from this government of Ontario, called a tax in the bill, being interpreted that way in Ottawa and certainly being interpreted that way by people who work in Ontario, who know when they look at their pay slips that this is an income tax deducted at source. The people who get up every morning and go to work in Ontario, 12 month a year, thanks to this Liberal government now get to pay more income tax and receive fewer services in Ontario, which I dare say is not what they bargained for. Not only is it an income tax, it’s a regressive income tax based on income categories.

But is it a health tax? We know it is not a premium, because you don’t get anything for it. But is it a health tax or is it some other kind of tax? I suppose you could say it was a health tax if the people of Ontario were guaranteed that the revenue generated by this new tax would be used for health services. We know already that the answer to that is no. We know that the government of the day has used some of this revenue already, according to their own answers in this place, for water mains, sewers and other things, instead of for health care in Ontario. But they say no. I hear a couple of the members opposite say, “No, it’s not so.”

I’ll look in the bill now, because I’m sure if it’s not so, the Liberal government that drafted this Bill 106 we’re debating would put in the bill that the money raised by this new tax in Ontario must be used for health care. Right? So the Liberal members—a couple are nodding over there. Let’s look in the bill and see if we can find a provision that says the money must be used for health care.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): It’s not in there, Jim.

Mr Flaherty: I tried to find it. I looked through it. I did find a provision—no, there’s nothing that says the revenue raised by this new tax must be used for health care. There is a provision, section 29.1, that says this: “The public accounts for each fiscal year shall include information about the use of the revenue from the Ontario health premium.”

Isn’t that nice? All of us in Ontario who work get to pay this thing called a health tax. It takes money out of our own pockets, up to \$900 off people. They take the money right out of people’s pockets, the people who go to work all across Ontario. They call it a health tax. They tried “health premium”; that doesn’t work. Call it what it is: a health tax. Is it really a health tax? No. The money goes into the general revenue fund, and they can use it for anything. They even put it in the bill they drafted. They say, “We’ll let you know. We’ll report to public accounts.” So a year later, after we all have this money deducted at source from our paycheques, they’ll let us know what they used it for. Who knows what they’re going to use the money for? We know it isn’t a premium; we know it is a tax. We know it’s not necessarily for health. So what should we call it? Why don’t we just call it what it is? It’s a tax. It’s an employment income tax increase in Ontario that the government is putting into the consolidated general revenue fund.

Now that we have that straightened out, let’s see what they are using the money for. In health care, we know they’ve proposed—well, they’ve already done it—fewer services for chiropractors, optometrists and physiotherapists. We know—because the Premier says he’s going to do it—that he’s going to buy back some privately owned clinics in Ontario. Now, here’s a real waste of taxpayers’ money: Here we have an MRI clinic in Ajax, Ontario—I’m proud to represent the riding of Whitby-Ajax—where people can get services, paid for by whom? Paid for by OHIP. Paid for by our publicly funded, publicly administered health care plan. What do the Premier and the Liberal government have against that? They say they’re in favour of that, as a matter of fact. They say they support the principles of the Canada Health Act. Yes, universal; yes, publicly administered by OHIP in Ontario. Why on earth would you want to shut that business down or have it run by civil servants instead of by people employed in the private sector? The people who need the treatments, the people who need diagnostic imaging, including CT scans and MRIs, don’t care, quite frankly, if it’s a civil servant who’s operating the MRI machine or whether it’s someone employed in the private

sector. They care about two things, maybe three: (1) Who pays? Is it covered by OHIP? The answer is yes. (2) Is the person administering the diagnostic test qualified to do so? The answer of course is yes, because the colleges govern and regulate that in Ontario.

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They also care about waiting lists, and do the privately operated clinics comply with the Canada Health Act? Yes they do, because the services are paid for by the public purse. They also reduce the waiting times in Ontario and that's what my constituents want. I don't know, Liberal members opposite, whether you hear that in your ridings or whether your ears are open, whether you hear this concern especially about MRIs, diagnostic imaging. Why on earth would you support a government policy that would increase waiting times in Ontario? Why would you vote for a bill that would result in people having to wait longer for important diagnostic imaging when the services provided in the form they're being provided now comply with the Canada Health Act? Surely this can only be some kind of strange ideology by the Liberal Party that says that somehow a service delivered by a public servant is necessarily a higher-quality service than that delivered by someone employed in the private sector. What nonsense. I hope you reflect on that when you think of how revenues are being used under this new tax in Ontario.

Here's another waste of money the Minister of Health talks about. We're going to have a new level of bureaucracy. Here's another great one. Watch where this money goes over the next couple of years in Ontario. We're going to have not just the bureaucracy that we have at Queen's Park—my goodness, we have a huge Ministry of Health, with all kinds of divisions and sections. Not only that, not only the regional health councils that we have, not only the 155 or so public hospitals in Ontario, with boards of governors, trustees, not only the Ontario Medical Association and the physicians and all the colleges that regulate health professionals; we're now going to have regional bureaucracies in Ontario. Here's a new invention by this Liberal government. It will require study, meetings, hiring people, memos between the people who are hired, more meetings to clarify the memos, and e-mail. It will require offices and meeting rooms so they can meet some more and talk to each other and reorganize. They'll probably have to hire some people and then they'll have to lay off some other people who were in the hospitals, probably, because they're fighting with the hospitals now.

And what will we end up with? Will we end up with one more service for a patient in need in Ontario? No, but we'll have more directors, managers and a whole new level of bureaucracy that the Liberal government could be proud of in Ontario. We're going the wrong way, I say to the members opposite. We're going the way of fewer services at greater cost and a more bureaucratic health system in Ontario. Can we trust them to do something about health care in the province?

Can we trust them to manage fiscally in a prudent way? We know that there were lots of promises made in

the election, 231—perhaps more than 231 because they don't think that Lorrie Goldstein got every one of them, although he went through all the documents and so on. They promised, in the fiscal sense, that they would not raise taxes. There are at least four or five good ones here that we can talk about and review after the first year. Number 65: "We will balance the budget"—they didn't do that—"keep taxes down"; they didn't do that; they raised taxes. We will "manage prudently." They didn't do that either. The public debt has gone up in Ontario under this new Liberal government. They also say, in number 69, "We will give you better value for your money, while keeping taxes down." That's wrong too. Taxes went up, they broke their promise, and services in health care went down. Number 70: "We will live by the balanced budget law." I really like that one. All these Liberals opposite—including the Premier, the Minister of Finance and the people who bring us Bill 106, the new tax—are the ones who said, in order to get elected in this province, "We will live by the balanced budget law."

That's the law that says that if you're going to raise taxes, you have to go to the people and get the people's OK to do that. After all, the government doesn't have any money that it hasn't taken from the people who work in Ontario in the first place. But you go to them and say, and it's a fair question, "Do you mind if we raise taxes? We want to use it for a good purpose." The Liberals would probably say, "Health care"; it's not so, of course, but they'd probably say that in order to try to get more money out of people in the province, as they did when they tried to call this a health premium instead of a health tax, and now just a tax. Anyway, they didn't live by the balanced budget law.

Number 71 is good too. It says, "We will make sure the debt goes in one direction only: down." Wrong. Have a look at the estimates for Ontario. Have a look at the spending and the size of the public debt in the province during your first year in office and you'll see it's gone up, my friends. "We will make sure the debt goes in one direction only: down." That's number 71, another broken promise by the Liberal government.

I'm trying to find one they kept here. Number 167: "We will balance the budget." That's a good one. They broke that promise.

Number 170 is not bad. Let's see: "We will make the budget more accountable." I see. We'll see about that.

What else do we have? Number 226: "We will hold the line on taxes." It's a strange way of holding the line on taxes. Tell that to somebody who gets up in the morning and works all winter and looks at their pay stub at the end of their two-week pay period or their one-week pay period and sees that you took more of their money and gave them less in services. Tell them that you kept promise number 226: "We will hold the line on taxes."

You said it again in number 227: "We will not raise the debt." There it is again. You promised it twice and you broke the promise twice in Ontario. There's more here, but I'm sure you know all the promises you made and I know how badly you must feel, having broken them.

I've been expecting the Premier to make an apology. You'd think, if you made all these promises and people relied on them and you got elected in Ontario, that you'd feel bad when you broke them and that you'd want to give a speech somewhere and say, "I'm sorry." And if people weren't satisfied with that, you'd go back to the people and hold an election and say, "I had to do this. I'm sorry I had to not keep my promises to all of you but here's the way it actually is, I think, and therefore will you elect me anyway, knowing that I can't keep my promises?"

There's no sign that he's prepared to do that yet. The Premier promises that there'll be a fixed election date in October 2007, but given his track record of broken promises, I don't think we can rely on that either. So all we can be sure of is that, I guess, because constitutionally there has to be an election within five years or so, he'll be forced then. The Lieutenant Governor will call him into his office and say, "Your time's up. You've got to go face the people in Ontario." It can't be too soon, that's for sure.

The Liberals had some consultations—I love these things; they know more ways to spend money—before the budget and they came back. They paid with your money to do this and produce this piece of paper. It's actually lots of stuff. They went around and talked to people and said that the people came back and told them they wanted a government they could trust, and they wanted some balance. You have to realize, the Liberal government did this just after they were elected, in the first six months or so, and it came back—it says right here in the summary that people expressed "their indignation about breaches of trust by governments." Imagine what they think of this Liberal government now—"breaches of trust by governments"; all those promises broken. What could be a more fundamental breach of trust?

Then the pledge that my colleague from Lanark referred to a few minutes ago in the House, actually signed by the Premier—I was there that morning in the Sheraton Centre in downtown Toronto. The taxpayer federation was there. The Premier-to-be was up there on a stage, proud as punch of himself. He had a big board with a pledge on it, and do you know what? He signed it. He said he would not raise taxes in Ontario, right there in front of all those people and those cameras and everything. Then he goes and talks to the people of Ontario, and they say, "We want to be able to trust our government." Then what does he do? He brings in a budget with the highest single tax increases in the history of the province of Ontario, when the Minister of Finance brought in the budget.

1710

It's shocking, isn't it? It's shocking, it's brazen; it actually mocks the people of Ontario. I had someone say to me in the county of Dufferin over the weekend, one of the few people who actually came up to me and who acknowledged to me—and he whispered it, of course—"I voted for McGuinty." I can understand how embarrassed

he was, given what's happened since then, all these broken promises. I can understand the Toronto Sun rating the Premier's performance as F for failure. There you go. Why? Because the Liberals spent all your taxpayers' money on this study, which said, yes, trust—confidence, en français—trust, have confidence in the word of government. And only one year in, all of those promises—broken. Those were the pre-budget consultations by the government, using taxpayers' money.

Now, this tax that Bill 106 proposes to bring in, as I say, is not a health tax; it's not a premium. If it were, people would be entitled to services for it. You remember back—and there is some confusion on this for people who remember OHIP premiums. You actually got something for them. That got you enrolled in the OHIP plan as an individual. If you paid the family rate, you got enrolled as a family. So there was an entitlement to that when you paid that OHIP premium. This tax that has been imposed doesn't give you that.

So what are we left with in Bill 106? We're left with a pure tax grab based on wages and salary, based on the level of your income that the government could use for any purpose it wants, that the government specifically promised not to do when it was running for public office and for which the Premier signed a pledge.

Interestingly, back in 1989, if you go back and look at when OHIP premiums were abolished, the government of the day was the Liberal government of David Peterson; the Minister of Finance was Robert Nixon. When the last Liberal government of Ontario abolished OHIP premiums—and they were premiums, not a tax—they said that it was an unfair burden on the people of Ontario. They saw the regressive nature of doing it. Here we have a Liberal government 15, 16 years later forgetting the lesson that the last Liberal government in this province understood, and that is the regressive nature of that kind of taxation for health services in Ontario.

Some Liberals—and this is in this study that I referred to a moment ago—say it's OK to increase taxes if it results in more services. As I say, the experience with this new tax in Ontario has been just the opposite. At the same time the tax was introduced, the government reduced health care services in the province, and now has taken an even more drastic step. Now it has said to the public hospitals across the province that they are not going to fund them sufficiently. We know that the hospitals need 4%, 5% or 6%; it depends on which hospital it is in the province. We know that some hospitals have struggled valiantly to balance their budgets over the course of the past few years. In my own riding, Lake-ridge Health has done the right thing, the board has done the right thing, the CEO has done the right thing. They struggled, they had to go through layoffs, they balanced their budget. The reward they get from the Liberal government, the Ministry of Health, is lower funding. So they are faced with the crisis again. You are doing exactly what you shouldn't do. You're saying to hospitals that have made the difficult decisions to become more efficient, "We're going to reduce your funding."

Now Mr Smitherman, the Minister of Health, wants to fight with the volunteer boards of directors, the boards of governors and trustees. He says to them, "Today's your deadline. Today, October 12, you have to bow down to the Liberal government of Ontario and accept the money we're giving you." Or what? He's going to put hospitals in receivership. That's what he threatens to do.

We have a bully as the Minister of Health, bullying volunteer boards of hospitals across the province of Ontario. That's what we see. He says to them, "All right, you don't like October 12. I'll give you a two-week reprieve. I'll give you to October 26." What an attitude to say to the volunteer boards across the province of Ontario, these people who are doing a great job in our communities—we all know them in our communities, volunteering in our local hospitals. Here's the Minister of Health saying to them on behalf of the Premier and the Liberal members opposite, "You will not have enough funding this year. You'll have to reduce your services." There will be layoffs and all the rest. We'll see that as we go forward in the next few months, this confrontational attitude that the Liberal government is taking with our public hospitals and their boards across the province.

At the same time, you increase the burden on the middle class. I represent Whitby-Ajax. A lot of people in my riding make \$50,000, \$60,000, \$70,000 a year. Sometimes often both mother and father, both partners, are working in the household. Maybe they're making \$70,000, \$80,000. Do you know what you've done to them, you Liberals opposite? You now have them working more than half the year for you, for the government. Can you imagine, more than half the year with an income like that, often with a couple of kids—these are folks who have higher insurance rates for their cars—you broke that promise too; I'll get to that; higher natural gas prices; higher electricity prices since you became the government; they've got mortgage payments that are likely to rise as interest rates rise.

Mr Dunlop: Look what they did to gasoline.

Mr Flaherty: Commuter rates. Look at that. Look at the burden they are faced with. They had a Liberal Party that said to them, "We will not raise your taxes," got elected and almost immediately raised their taxes.

It's just another burden that puts the tax rate for hard-working middle-class people in the province of Ontario, who work 12 months of the year, lucky to get two or three weeks off, at around 50%, half their money—not for their families, not for their kids, not for hockey equipment, not for dance lessons, not for ju-jitsu and all those other things that kids do that cost money. Not for that, no; for the government so the government can use it for what? For the consolidated general revenue fund, and it goes down into some big sewer and we don't get any more health services; in fact, we get less.

Congratulations to you in your first year of government for increasing the tax burden on middle-class people in Ontario. They have enough of a burden and you're adding to that burden.

Tax policy: I know some Liberals believe you can increase taxes and it doesn't harm the economy. Have a

look at the work of your own Task Force on Productivity, Competitiveness and Economic Progress in the province of Ontario. Have a look at what our tax burden is in the province. The member for Essex ought to read it. It's fascinating reading about competitiveness and productivity in Ontario. We get some people saying—

Interjection.

Mr Flaherty:—like the member for Essex probably says, "You know, our corporate tax burden is about equal with our major competitive jurisdictions in the United States." It's wrong. That's wrong.

Interjection.

Mr Flaherty: No, actually read it. The minister of infrastructure hasn't read this. Can you imagine? The minister for infrastructure of the province of Ontario is unfamiliar with the work of the Task Force on Competitiveness, Productivity and Economic Progress appointed by the government of Ontario? He ought to read it. The disadvantage to our corporations, small and large—and you know, most of them are small businesses: 9%, and worse now because your tax increase has come along since.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): Mississippi.

Mr Flaherty: No, not Mississippi. Boston is not in Mississippi. Atlanta is not in Mississippi. Philadelphia is not in Mississippi. I'm going to have to now buy a map for the minister of infrastructure because he's unfamiliar with the geography of the United States. He thinks Boston is in Mississippi. He thinks Philadelphia is in Alabama. We've got a minister over there who's in trouble. He's in charge of building infrastructure. Oh, my goodness. We're in worse trouble than we thought. I knew we were in trouble with tax increases. Now we're in big trouble. Who knows where he'll build buildings? He might think Thunder Bay is in Arkansas or somewhere. He might think that. We'll have to get him out, travelling around a bit. You've got to get out more. You've got to travel around a bit more. You've got to move around more.

1720

There are two problems here. One is the increase in taxes—corporate taxes, personal taxes, small business taxes—in Ontario. The other is the fiscal mismanagement in the first year: going on a spending spree of more than \$4 billion; government expenses just taking off like wildfire. It is quite a spending spree in Ontario.

If you are a small business person in Ontario, or someone outside of Ontario thinking of investing in Ontario, one of the first things that you look at is tax policy. In fact, the task force on competitiveness and others have said that the largest determining factor in terms of investment and reinvestment in Ontario is tax policy. Naturally it is. The owner of a small business wants to see what he or she is going to get out of it after they pay all their taxes—less than 50% in the province of Ontario. They're going to want to see whether there is a capital tax. We still have one in Ontario; one of the few jurisdictions that does. That means you pay a tax whether you have a profit or not.

Interjection.

Mr Flaherty: I started that? No, it's not there. The minister of infrastructure really has got to do some—maybe the member for Thunder Bay will help him. They're working on the geography now, about Thunder Bay. Come back; I'll help you with the tax thing in a minute. You keep working on that geography. He's from Toronto, so it may take some time. His mother can't help him because she's going to be busy making \$70,000 a year for the Liberal government.

Interjection.

Mr Flaherty: No, that's only for six months; I'm sorry—\$140,000 annualized. Thank you for correcting me on that.

There's the uncertainty that goes with higher taxes, and these are serious matters for investors in Ontario. I remember visiting an auto parts plant in the county of Simcoe not long ago, a business owned by a couple of entrepreneurs. They're opening another plant. They talked to me about, "Where will our next plant be? Will it be in Michigan"—closer to their major purchasers—"or will it be in Ontario?" One of the fundamental factors is tax policy.

Similarly, in the region of Peel in the past six months: in the plastics business, two plants there, planning to open other plants. The entrepreneur has a couple of plants also in the United States, has to make that decision about, "Where should my next plant be? Should it be in Chicago or should it be in the region of Peel?"

Mr Levac: No.

Mr Flaherty: The member opposite from Peterborough says no, and I agree with him. We want that business here. But you don't get the business here by upping taxes all the time. You may not realize this, but when you increase taxes, you discourage people, I say to the member from Peterborough. You want people to work hard, you want people to reinvest in their businesses, you want them to hire more people in Ontario. You don't do that by increasing the tax burden on entrepreneurs and on the middle class in Ontario, and you don't do it by avoiding some of the fundamental issues that we have.

Interjections.

Mr Flaherty: The Speaker is flexing his Speaker's robes.

There is so much more to cover. There's a whole year of Liberal government. Look at the issues the Liberal government hasn't dealt with that really matter to business.

I was in Haldimand-Norfolk recently, talking to a businessman down there—successful and employs a lot of people in Haldimand-Norfolk. Most of his product is exported to the United States. There are incredible insurance problems for businesses—small businesses, medium-sized businesses—who export to the United States. The insurance coverage costs have skyrocketed for these folks. This has to do, of course, to a significant extent, with border issues. You look at this morning's paper, talking about border issues, and it's a tragedy, the

fact that the Liberal government of Ontario has done nothing to help alleviate the border issues in Fort Erie, Niagara, Windsor, and in Sarnia, the Bluewater Bridge. These are fundamental issues to the strength and the vitality of the Ontario economy. Don't raise taxes. Help Ontario businesses export more efficiently and less expensively. That's what you can do if you actually want to create jobs in the province.

The job news isn't good. I don't know if you looked at the job figures. They were released the other day showing the increase in jobs across Ontario as less than 1% this year. It's bad. Jobs are down in manufacturing and light industry. Jobs are up in the last month in education. The employment numbers are bad. They're flat. When we were the government, in the days when we were reducing taxes in Ontario and people were investing and growing their businesses, particularly small business in Ontario, it resulted in the creation of more than a million new jobs. Look at the numbers now.

In September, employment in Ontario was little changed, leaving gains so far this year at only 0.9% in the province. Employment rose in September in educational services, mostly at the primary and secondary level, offsetting a loss the month before. Employment also increased in public administration, mainly at the provincial level. There you were hiring more people to work for the government in Ontario. There were losses in manufacturing, with the largest decline in food, beverage and tobacco products. Employment also declined in transportation and warehousing. Those are the facts in Ontario with your Liberal Party forming a government in this province.

You have to manage better fiscally. You have to control spending in the province. You have to stop increasing taxes. The burden on entrepreneurs is excessive in the province, and it's not competitive. You also have to do something about the border crossings. We were well on the way that way. I was the Minister of Enterprise. I don't mind saying that I worked closely with a Liberal, Allan Rock. I did. He had the right idea about what needed to be done. I ask you to follow through on the good work that we did and get that done, because it's absolutely imperative.

The member for Essex is shaking his head. He should know better than anybody what needs to be done in Essex if you want to preserve jobs in Essex, if you want to grow the industry in Essex. You'd think you'd recognize that. It's vitally important for our business. That business, US-Canada trade, is \$1 billion per day; 60% of it comes from the province of Ontario. We're all familiar, I hope, with the fact that more and more of the goods are transported these days by road. So it's vitally important in terms of just-in-time delivery in the auto sector and in the agricultural sector that we ensure there is efficient crossing of our borders.

Auto insurance, of course, is a mess generally, thanks to the breaching of the two promises. The first promise by the Liberals was to immediately reduce premiums by 10%. They've broken that promise. And there was a

second promise to make sure that in the next year, the premiums would be reduced by 10% as well. We're into the second year now and we can fully anticipate that that promise will be broken. In fact, last week at estimates, the Minister of Finance virtually admitted that it is unlikely he will accomplish that goal. So we'll have the two broken promises on automobile insurance.

On the spending side—more than \$4 billion in new spending. This is the list, the lovely list of \$4 billion in new spending by the Liberal government, resulting in a substantial deficit and increase in the public debt. It's fundamental that there be control over spending. I started off by saying that if you look at the budget now, spending is now approaching \$80 billion in Ontario, compared to \$65 billion just three years ago. It tells you a great deal about the consequences of runaway spending in the province.

When you look at the nature of the spending—the Minister of Finance gave a speech to the economic club, a week ago Friday I believe it was, in which he said he was going to do a line-by-line analysis of the spending of each ministry. Well, he can do it if he wants to—it has been done before—but relatively speaking, it's a waste of time, because there are three ministries, as you know, where most of the money gets spent: health, education and social services.

1730

The Liberals have already devastated the Ministry of Agriculture and reduced the spending—and there wasn't much money there—dramatically by \$65 million, at the same time going on a \$4-billion spending spree in Ontario. If you look at health care spending in particular, health care spending now is at about 46% to 48% of the operating budget of the government, depending on the final figures for the year.

If you look at the government's own economic data in the 2003 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review, some of the numbers are very informative. Eighty per cent of the operating spending of the provincial government is transferred to hospitals, school boards and other public sector partners of government. In turn, more than 70% of that is paid out in salaries, wages and benefits. That's in health, education and social services primarily.

If there is going to be a serious effort by the Liberal government to balance the budget in Ontario, then the Liberal government is going to have to address the issues that arise out of that. And I tell you: So far, you're on the wrong track. The spending increases with respect to salaries for community college professors and teachers was relatively high, as you know. I know the Minister of Finance doesn't want to talk about it, but we know that the increase proposed for the physicians in Ontario will average 6% per year over four years. We know that negotiations are ongoing with the school boards. We know the teachers' unions are negotiating with the school boards. Other public sector unions are negotiating. If you're going to control spending in the province of Ontario, you have to address the issue and address it in a consistent manner in order to avoid labour strife in the

province. So I challenge those opposite to address that issue if you're going to control spending as we go forward.

In health, we know that spending overall, according to the government's own figures in the economic outlook, has averaged an increase of 8% per year over the course of the last four years. Now you're saying to hospitals, "4.3%," or whatever it is, and you're saying in effect to the hospitals, "Cut your services to people despite the fact that we've imposed a new tax." Drug expenses, as you know, have been averaging increases of 15% to 20% per year.

The federal money negotiated—and the Liberals seem very proud of this federal money—is about two weeks' worth of health care in the province, and it's flatlined, as I understand it, as we go forward. So that's going to be of very minimal help to the people of Ontario in terms of additional services for health care.

More and more is being spent, and you see it in the outlook. On page 36 of the economic outlook, you see the fact that there are quite substantial revenues in the province, revenues anticipated to go in this fiscal year from \$68.5 billion to \$75 billion, and even more in the following fiscal. In fact, it's anticipated that the increases will be \$4.1 billion per year going forward on average. It's at page 6: "On the basis of private-sector consensus economic projections, Ontario can anticipate average revenue growth of about \$4.1 billion annually."

Surely with prudent fiscal management in Ontario, a competent government could manage to balance a budget year after year with increases in revenues of \$4.1 billion annually. But you can't do it when you increase spending by 10% from 2002-03 to 2003-04, which you've done. You can't do it unless you take some progressive steps with respect to true reform of health care in Ontario. And by that I don't mean the government buying private clinics; what I do mean is complying with the provisions of the Canada Health Act, a publicly funded health care system, but privately delivered services. Nowhere in the Canada Health Act will you find a prohibition to that. In fact, you see it being done in Quebec, you see it being done in Alberta, but for some reason this Liberal government, ideologically driven in some way, seems to think it is somehow a defect to have someone in the private sector delivering health care services, even if they do so at less expense, more efficiently and reducing waiting lists. That's an issue that has to be addressed by this Liberal government, I tell you, if you ever want to get re-elected in Ontario, because you can't take more money from people, say it's for health care and then see the quality and quantity of the services diminishing in the province.

Now we see the costing of promises. As I raised with the Premier in question period today, we had this really rather unpleasant incident in the government in the last year, where we see a party running for power, costing its promises, making 231 promises or more, and saying, "Those promises have been fully costed"—those were the words of the now-Premier of Ontario—"at \$5.9 bil-

lion.” That’s what was said. Then, shortly after the election last October, it was learned, and not surprisingly, that the provincial government public service and the Ministry of Finance had costed the promises made by the Liberal Party when they were seeking office. This is prudent. This is the kind of thing the superb people in the Ministry of Finance do when they see that a new government might be elected, or the changing economic circumstances. They look at what’s being promised and they say, “This is what it will cost”—their best estimates of what it will cost, of course.

If it were close, I wouldn’t quibble about it, and I’m sure that we in opposition wouldn’t quibble about it, because we want to be constructive. We want to be helpful, because goodness knows, these Liberals need a lot of help, especially about fiscal management. We warm to you. We want to help you manage fiscally in Ontario. As someone in Ontario who has actually balanced a budget, I’m willing to help you do it. All right? You too can reach that plateau. You can climb that mountain. You can do it. But you can’t do it with extravagant promises.

The costing of the promises—this was produced by the Ministry of Finance.

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: It’s untrue that the member opposite does not have a sense of humour.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you for your contribution. I would return to the member for Whitby-Ajax.

Interjection.

Mr Flaherty: My mother is retired, but if you could find a spot for her over there—I mean, \$70,000 for six months is not bad. And the estimated cost did not include that appointment, by the way. I looked for it in here, but it’s not there.

In a serious way—and I say to all members, this is serious business—the costing of the promises that was done a year ago exceeds \$18 billion. That’s more than three times the amount Mr McGuinty told the people of Ontario his fully costed promises would cost.

They have known about this report opposite for a year. We applied for the report under the information and privacy legislation in Ontario. The Liberal government fought us time after time. They took every procedural step to try to make sure that this document never came to light. Now we know why, of course. It’s embarrassing. It’s horribly embarrassing to the government of the day to say, “Our promises, ladies and gentlemen of Ontario, voters of Ontario, are \$5.9 billion,” and have the professionals in the Ministry of Finance, who know the programs in the various ministries in Ontario, say, “Actually, no, \$18 billion.” It’s more than \$18 billion, because some are to be determined. So it’s actually more than that.

It goes to trustworthiness, doesn’t it? It goes to whether one can have any faith at all in the word of this government, particularly in fiscal matters. And that’s so important for our economic growth, for our quality of life

and for our standard of living in Ontario. It also shows, even with the small number of promises that have been kept, that the cost of them is more than \$4 billion so far.

1740

I say to the members opposite and the Liberal government, you promised to manage prudently. Have a look at this list. I’m sure you have previously. Have a look at the costs of these promises and start to control spending; to use the Minister of Finance’s phrase, “cost containment.” That means difficult decisions. I know; I was there. It means that people will be unhappy with some of those decisions in some sectors but it’s something you have to do. That’s the responsibility of government. You have to make choices about spending. You cannot fund all things for all people. You have proven that you can promise all things to all people. You did that. But now, of course, you’re learning you can’t deliver.

I encourage you to manage prudently in the province. It’s vitally important for the next generation, certainly. It’s a very competitive world. Don’t increase taxes like you do in Bill 106. Cut spending instead, or at least control the rate of growth of spending as we go forward. You can’t have spending increasing at 4%, 5% and 6% per annum with an economy growing at 3% per annum unless you want government to take up more and more of the GDP, unless you want to encourage people who are entrepreneurial in this country to cash out. We don’t want them to cash out. We want them to invest and reinvest and create more and more jobs. We don’t want to discourage entrepreneurs. We don’t want to discourage people from investing in Ontario who live abroad and are looking for opportunities to grow their businesses elsewhere.

We have some promises that have been broken. We also have some opportunities now. There is an opportunity for this government to manage prudently. There’s an opportunity to look seriously at spending, and I don’t mean what the Minister of Finance has referred to by his line-to-line review. I mean looking at health care spending, looking at health care reform, looking at efficiencies, as the government of Tony Blair has done, in health care, looking at opportunities for more private delivery of health care, which will actually drive down waiting times in the province of Ontario.

There are some very good examples, some simple examples—I urge you to look at them—as in Alberta, as in the opportunities here for cataract surgery. The surgeons, the ophthalmologists who do that surgery—which many of us will undergo if we live long enough because, as you know, it’s something that happens as you get older—can do it at 75% of the current costs. They can get rid of the waiting lists in the province without any investment by the government of Ontario in capital. They’ll do it themselves. That’s the kind of service increase that people in Ontario, particularly in the aging population, want to see happen.

I’ve spoken already about diagnostic imaging and the importance of that. How can you legitimately say to someone in the province who is disabled and not working

because of a back problem they have to wait months and months for an MRI so they could even discover, and the radiologist and the orthopaedic surgeon give them advice about, the nature of the problem and how it can be remedied so that they can get back to work and be rehabilitated in Ontario? That hurts the economy in the province as well as hurting the individual and his or her family.

I encourage you to get more for the money that is being spent on the health care side so that services will actually improve.

In education, I hope you will reconsider a hard cap of 20 students per class. Talk to the school principals who are experienced across Ontario about that. Talk to the member from Sudbury, who I know was a school principal at one time, about the foolishness of, "What do you do with the 21st student and the 22nd student?" about having to have more portables, about having to hire an extra teacher, about the inefficiencies of that. I know there's concern with literacy. We need numeracy and literacy. We need computer skills for our young people. Whether they're in a class of 19, 23 or 21 isn't the issue. The issue is the quality of the training, the opportunities for teachers to learn, the opportunity for many teachers who don't know how to teach phonics today to learn to teach phonics, because some children need to learn to read phonetically rather than in other ways.

So I encourage you in the education sphere, which, as you know, is a huge spender in government, to use those resources more efficiently so that we get to that goal of increased numeracy, literacy and computer skills which will help our young people be ready for the challenges they face in a competitive world, and not set artificial goals that will benefit very few in the province.

There has been a fundamental breach of trust by the Liberal government with the people of Ontario in one year. There were numerous promises made. Many of them, of course, have been broken. This breeds a certain cynicism among voters in the province and, regretfully, they won't be able to exercise their opportunity to take a more positive view and make a more positive choice in Ontario for a few years yet.

They see that taxes are up and that spending is up and that the debt is up. It's been a while in Ontario since we've had a Liberal government, but if you go back and look at the last one, from 1985 to 1990, you'll see that same pattern in a time of economic growth, where even with the increase in revenues—and we've already noted that the increases in revenues now are more than \$4 billion per year—even then, the demand for spending by the Liberal government, in that case the David Peterson government, was insatiable. Every year, more spending. Every year, higher tax revenues and, unbelievably, more and more debt accrued. And that was during the good times.

We need to be prudent. I encourage the Liberal government to be prudent, to look a little ahead. Sir John A. Macdonald was fond of saying, "Look a little ahead, my friends," and I encourage you to look a little ahead.

Economic growth may not be 3% or 4% several years out. We have oil prices going up. We have the Canadian dollar going up. We have other variables. We have intense competition around the world. Look a little ahead. Be prudent in your economic management. Control spending increases in Ontario. Make sure that you concentrate on the fundamental services of health care, services for vulnerable people and education as we go forward, and not embark on \$4-billion-plus spending sprees as you did in your first year in office.

Have a look at the costs that you're incurring in collective bargaining. It's vitally important that there be cost containment in that area. As you know, if there isn't, you'll be facing the kind of situation that the government that followed the last Liberal government faced—that is, the NDP government of Bob Rae—and a social contract situation which was unpleasant for all concerned, I guess it's fair to say, when that happened back in the early 1990s. So reflect on what it takes to manage prudently. You can't do the steps that you need to take in one fell swoop, but you can start now.

Last year, the Minister of Finance and the Premier said there was a four-year plan. In his speech to the Economic Club of Toronto a couple of weeks ago, the Minister of Finance said there's a three-year plan. Many people are wondering if there's a plan at all to manage the finances of the province of Ontario prudently, and I urge you to have a look at what needs to be done. Encourage economic growth in the province of Ontario because, without economic growth, there will not be sufficient funds for the increase in spending in health care, education, and services for vulnerable people.

So it's vital that we have that economic growth, and if we're going to have that economic growth, you need to reduce taxes, encourage entrepreneurs, and encourage people in the province of Ontario to work by letting them keep more of their own money. If do you that, then we can look forward to increased prosperity in Ontario. We can look forward to what has always been viewed, I think, as the Canadian dream, and that is that each generation has a higher quality of life and a higher standard of living than the generation before. You don't do that by increasing the burden on the backs of middle-class people and entrepreneurs in Ontario.

1750

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms Martel: I want to follow up on something the member from Whitby-Ajax said, which is that the Liberals need to be reminded that not all of the new health care tax is actually going into health care services. He talked about sewer pipes and ads. When he did that, some of the Liberal backbenchers shook their heads as if that wasn't true.

So, let's go first to the government's own budget, on page 44—and I would encourage Mr Caplan to read it. Page 44 of the Liberal government's budget lists almost \$200 million in so-called, alleged health care spending which is outside the Ministry of Health line. It includes \$113 million for watershed and waste water projects

under the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Natural Resources. It also includes \$3 million to promote exercise under the Ministry of Tourism and Recreation.

This is \$200 million that, I remind you, was supposed to go directly into health care services—and it isn't. It's going into hard services, services that most people out there would never conceive to be defined as health care services.

Secondly, if you go to page 70 of the budget, you see why the Liberals had to do that; that is, divert some of the premium money, the health care tax money, to things outside of health care. On page 70 of the budget it clearly shows the revenue that the Liberal government is getting this year.

They are getting \$726 million in health transfers from the federal Liberal government. They are getting another \$1.635 billion from the new health tax. That takes them up to \$2.361 billion. That's not the same amount of money that appears on the line under the Ministry of Health. In fact, the Ministry of Health spending for this year is about \$200 million less than that amount of revenue. So it's very clear that this money is being spent on other than health care services.

Mrs Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): I would just like to follow through on some of the comments that were made by the member for Whitby-Ajax: "Follow through on the good work that we did. Let's talk about all the good work that we did, the fiscal responsibility, how our business community was supported."

As many of you know, I come from a small business background. So, I want to talk from very personal experiences that I saw first-hand throughout the riding of Huron-Bruce.

What they did was to give us blackouts, which hurt our industrial business and our—

Interjection.

Mrs Mitchell: These are some of the things that happened. Why did it happen? That's what you ask yourself.

The member over here wants to know, "Well, how did that happen?" That happened because we didn't keep our infrastructure the way it was needed. We went forward into a deregulated market without getting all of the policies in place. And I'm glad that we have the opportunity to debate.

What else did they give us? Poor roads. One of the things that I also heard was "moving our merchandise down the roads." Let's talk about the roads in our rural communities. I can tell you that if you're driving a truck in our rural communities, you can put it through all the gears in one shot just going from A to B. That's what your government gave us in our rural communities.

Let's talk about some of the other things that were given to us: the infrastructure, the cost of the sewage, the water and all of these systems in rural communities—bringing them up to standard.

When the government withdrew its support, the business community then had to come to the table and

put in an appropriate amount to move their businesses forward.

So when we talk about government and, "Follow through on the good work," I'm pleased to be part of a government that will support our business community and move this province forward in a strong economic state.

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I just want to compliment my colleague from Whitby-Ajax for an excellent dissertation this afternoon. He was the finance minister, and the last finance minister in the province of Ontario to fully balance the books. He did that with credibility—truly balanced books.

You guys could have balanced the books, as the honourable member pointed out in his remarks. You've been on a \$4-billion spending spree, and you've been trying to blame it all on the previous government. Shame on you is all I can say.

The honourable member next to me here just spoke about rural Ontario. Rural Ontario is being left out of your government. I think only three of your cabinet ministers come from non-major urban centres. There is no representation from rural Ontario.

A funny thing happened when honourable members from all sides of the House were at the International Plowing Match and Rural Expo in Meaford just outside of my riding some three weeks ago. The Liberal wagon was ahead of us in the parade. As we went through the parade, they would get boos. They got booed when they were on stage and Premier McGuinty said he had no more money for farmers, who are having the toughest time—the greatest crisis, certainly the beef industry and the livestock industry, in the history of Ontario—and he had no more money that day for farmers in the BSE crisis. But because he got booed, sure enough, four or five days later, he suddenly found \$35 million more for BSE. I congratulated—

Mr Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): Thirty.

Mr Wilson: It was \$30 million more; I'm corrected by my honourable colleague.

The fact of the matter is, he says he has no money for anything, and then all of a sudden he has money. So I don't think you guys are being completely forthright about the books at this time. I don't think you're managing with competence or honesty.

I also want to talk about the fact that my colleague mentioned competitiveness and the need to remain competitive. We've had a real blow since you guys came to office. In the last little while, Nacan starch products, Backyard Products, Keller Electric and Blue Mountain Pottery—500 jobs lost in the last few weeks in Collingwood as a result of you not keeping this province competitive.

Ms Churley: I'm very pleased to have a couple of minutes to respond to the speech made by the member for Whitby-Ajax. Of course, I listened carefully to it and all of the comments after that, and I must say, it gives me an opportunity to remind people once again what the Liberals said before the election, before they went out

and made over 200 promises that they knew they couldn't keep. I'm going to read it into the record again because every time I hear Liberals get up and justify their broken promises on the basis of, "Oh, we didn't know there was going to be such a big deficit"—they did know.

I'm going to quote again: "I therefore take it that there is a \$5-billion risk in the budget.... So, Minister, I say to you again, I do think your budget is high risk"—Gerry Phillips, estimates committee, June 3, 2003.

"Liberal MPP Monte Kwinter ... accused the government of hiding the fact it has a growing deficit that could reach \$5 billion"—Canadian Press.

Interjections.

Ms Churley: Yes, we know what your answer is. It's the Pinocchio answer. In fact, I just held a party to mark the first anniversary of this Liberal government with a big Pinocchio nose on it, for good reason.

Not only that, this is what was said by Gerry Phillips in 2002: "Billions of dollars of off-book debt are piling up on school boards, hospitals, universities, college and nursing home owners. The province guaranteed to pay the principal and interest, but there is at least \$5 billion of fairly new debt that does not show up on the province's books."

I have even more quotes. The Liberals knew there was a huge deficit. Now they're out there apologizing to the people of Ontario for breaking promises and trying to blame it on a deficit they didn't know about. They knew about the deficit and fooled the people of Ontario into electing them on false promises.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Whitby-Ajax has two minutes to reply.

Mr Flaherty: I thank the member for Toronto-Danforth twice for her comments, particularly the comments about the foreknowledge that the Liberal

government had before it was elected with respect to the challenges that would be faced by government. This challenge, by the way, of controlling spending is a challenge that any government would face. We faced it for eight years in government and tried to control spending and had some success, but not enough, quite frankly. It is a major challenge to control spending in Ontario and not let it spiral away from you. In fact, that's in the document that was produced by Mr Sorbara, the Minister of Finance, the economic outlook for 2003, where he said, "The only sustainable approach in the long run, both for households and for governments, is to keep spending in line with income."

"While governments and households are dissimilar in many ways, both must live within their means."

So we have to live within our means as government.

We, as opposition, intend to try to keep you to account in this way, as we have tried today in debate. We will watch the spending. We will encourage you not to increase taxes and, in fact, to reduce taxes and encourage investment. A very important concern is this, and that is that investment decisions are made today for two and three and four and five years hence. When investors who are in business in Ontario today, or abroad looking at Ontario as a place to start a business, invest or grow an existing business, to add plant or new equipment—we want them to be encouraged to invest in the province of Ontario and not discouraged by poor fiscal management, uncertainty and high taxes.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes this round of debate on Bill 106.

It being 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 pm.

The House adjourned at 1801.

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Ces listes figurent dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et du premier lundi de chaque mois. Par contre, une liste des circonscriptions paraît si l'espace est disponible.

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