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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 16 November 2004

Mardi 16 novembre 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 16 November 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 16 novembre 2004

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

METIS NATION

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): It is my pleasure to welcome members of the Metis Nation of Ontario to Queen's Park today. In particular, I would like to welcome MNO president Tony Belcourt and all the members of the Georgian Bay Metis Council, many of whom are my constituents.

These members of MNO are here, along with Regional Chief Charles Fox, to attend a commemorative gathering on the anniversary of the hanging and death of Louis Riel, and to honour his memory and celebrate his contribution to his people and to Canada. As well, the gathering today honours the historic bond between the MNO and First Nations. A protocol has just been signed between the MNO and the Chiefs of Ontario.

The Metis Nation of Ontario currently has major issues with the MNR, and I'd like to read a clip. I want to put this on the record today.

"On October 7, 2004, Metis Nation of Ontario (MNO) president Tony Belcourt and the Ontario regional chief of the Chiefs of Ontario, Charles Fox, expressed dismay at the actions of the Ministry of Natural Resources, which unilaterally decided to break the historic agreement with the Metis Nation of Ontario. The MNR announced the changes with no notice to the Metis people.

"Mr Belcourt and Ontario Regional Chief Fox called upon Premier McGuinty to immediately convene a meeting to discuss the creation of an aboriginal policy, to prevent this situation from occurring in the future.

"The government continues to treat the aboriginal people in Ontario in an arbitrary manner. Ontario Regional Chief Fox and Mr Belcourt said that they expect the government to live up to its commitment to the constitutionally recognized aboriginal people in Ontario—the First Nations and the Metis Nation."

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this today.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): Before I start my statement, I just want to correct a date I cited in yesterday's statement. My by-election was May 13, and Ms Fairclough's was May 15. I apologize for that error.

GORDON KENNARD

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I rise today to honour a long-time resident of Hamilton East who passed away April 12, 2004, at the age of 82.

Mr Gordon Kennard was a very special person who did not allow his physical disabilities and challenges to keep him from living a life that was full and meaningful. When Gord was born, his family was advised to place him in a home, but his loving and close family would not do so and Gord was enrolled at George Armstrong school in Hamilton, where he made close friends who remained part of his circle all of his life.

Through his physical therapy at Chedoke, Gord met a doctor who saw his potential and helped him to obtain a position at Chedoke Hospital as an orderly, where he worked until retirement. He became a proud and active member of his union, the Canadian Union of Public Employees.

For Gord, the church and the NDP were what kept everything in perspective. He might have experienced adversity because of his many health challenges, but they never stopped him. He was a long-time Hamilton East NDP executive member and a proud life member of the New Democratic Party. Talking politics at the food court of Hamilton's Centre Mall was a favourite pastime, and he was never prouder than when he signed up his own church minister as a member of the NDP. He also was a talented pianist who played the organ on most Sundays at church, Fairfield-St David's United.

I feel honoured to have known Gord Kennard. Gord was a man of courage and dignity and used his life and time to work for the betterment of everyone. His compassion for others was limitless, perhaps because he himself experienced cruel taunts and discrimination.

Rest in peace, Gordon. You touched many in Hamilton by your kindness and caring, and are missed.

HEALTHY WORKPLACE AWARD

Mr Kuldip Kular (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): I rise today to acknowledge the tremendous contribution of DaimlerChrysler Canada to both the city of Brampton and the province of Ontario. DaimlerChrysler Canada and the Canadian Auto Workers have recently been awarded the National Quality Institute's Healthy Workplace Award. The Healthy Workplace Award recognizes employers who promote, encourage, support and offer exemplary health-related policies and programs in the workplace.

The National Quality Institute has recognized the unique collaborative partnership between the company and the union, and the innovative health, safety and wellness initiatives delivered to DaimlerChrysler Canada's employees, retirees, and their families.

DaimlerChrysler Canada and the CAW provide numerous employee initiatives, such as health and safety programs and policies, education and training programs, on-site health and wellness services, and environmental programs and policies. This award recognizes the way in which DaimlerChrysler and the CAW are working together to ensure DaimlerChrysler's international success. I commend the efforts of both DaimlerChrysler and the Canadian Auto Workers union and congratulate both DaimlerChrysler and the Canadian Auto Workers on their award.

SCARECROW FESTIVAL

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I rise in the House today to pay tribute to the organizing committee and over 120 volunteers who made the eighth annual Meaford Scarecrow Invasion and Family Festival possible. In a bid to set a new Guinness world record for the largest scarecrow population in the world, thousands of scarecrows have been found sitting on front lawns, climbing up lampposts and lounging on front porches all over my riding for the past couple of months.

This year was especially significant because the organizing committee, led by head scarecrow Marilyn Morris, partnered with the executive of the International Plowing Match. Scarecrows were a prominent theme during the rural expo, with over 500 of them on display throughout the tented city and beside signage leading visitors to the event.

While the partnership was a tremendous success for both committees, I guess it was a little bit too confusing for Ministry of Transportation officials. It seems the MTO took the scarecrow invasion title just a fraction too literally and feared for the safety of people in my riding. I don't know how else to explain their decision to remove all the scarecrows from their highways.

While that may be a little bit untrue, Mr Speaker, I can think of one other explanation: Perhaps MTO officials were worried that the travellers going to the plowing match on Highway 26, the roughest highway in this province, could not afford any distraction. Drivers taking their eye off the road or a hand off the wheel for even a split second risked hitting one of the potholes, sending them into the ditch for an up-close-and-personal visit with each of the scarecrows.

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE FACILITIES

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): I rise in the House today to speak about the tremendous opportunities for post-secondary students that are now available in Durham region at Durham College, which

has served students in the region and beyond for over 37 years, and at the province's newest university, the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, or UOIT, as it's known locally. I'm sure my friends opposite, the members for Whitby-Ajax, Oshawa, Durham, and Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, would agree with me.

In what many consider a model for post-secondary education in the 21st century, UOIT shares its campus with Durham College, one of the province's leading community colleges. Less than two years after opening its doors, enrolment at the university already stands at 1,850 full-time students, and Durham College has more than 5,600 full-time students and an astounding 19,000 part-time students.

Recently, I had the pleasure of attending the grand opening of the university's new academic buildings and the brand new, state-of-the-art campus library, which serves both the college and the university. The buildings reflect the college's and the university's dedication to academic excellence and cutting-edge, market-oriented innovation. That commitment is attracting some of the finest scholars and researchers in the world. Just recently, for example, one of the university's engineering professors, Dr Ibrahim Dincer, received UOIT's first major research award, the \$100,000 Premier's Research Excellence Award, for his leading-edge work involving practical fuel cell technology for automobiles.

For more than a decade, parents in the region have dreamed of a local university that would enrich the lives of their children and of students from across Canada and around the world. Today, thanks to the tireless efforts of local educators and countless volunteers, as well as the support of the local and Ontario governments, that dream is a wonderful reality.

I proudly invite Ontario students to learn more about these two great post-secondary schools on-line at www.durhamcollege.ca and www.uoit.ca.

1340

PHARMACISTS

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I would like to join all members of this House today in welcoming over 100 of Ontario's professional pharmacists, who are here at Queen's Park to celebrate Pharmacists' Day.

We clearly acknowledge and value the professional services provided by Ontario pharmacists every single day. They don't simply dispense medications. They give invaluable health advice. They recognize and intervene when medications are prescribed that could cause adverse reactions or even lead to hospitalization, the number one reason why seniors go into hospitals for a pharmacological reaction.

The Minister of Health lauds his OMA agreement that bonuses doctors by \$50 million if they will help cut consumption of medications for seniors and social assistance recipients and their children for up to \$200 million, and yet nowhere has the government acknowledged the vital

role that pharmacists play as learned intermediaries in the drug prescribing and dispensing continuum.

The Ontario Pharmacists' Association has expressed concern about the growing number of Americans coming across the border into Ontario to acquire cheaper drugs and the proliferation of Internet pharmacies. Perhaps the Ontario College of Pharmacists should be focusing on creating proper regulations governing the practice of pharmacy in this province and not simply getting involved in attempting to manage the business side of pharmacy in this province.

STEVEN TRUSCOTT

Mrs Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): I would like to state that the people of Clinton wish to see the final chapter of the Steven Truscott case resolved quickly.

As you are aware, this event took place 45 years ago in Clinton, Ontario, a small town in my riding, and many people today still feel a very strong attachment to this case. Justice Minister Cotler stated that there is a reasonable basis to conclude that a miscarriage of justice likely occurred in this case.

Closure needs to be brought to the case that has weighed heavily on the people of Clinton for over four decades. The people of Clinton and Ontario wait to see the final chapter written.

PHARMACISTS

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I'd like to echo some of the sentiments of my colleague from Burlington and welcome to the Legislature today the members of the Ontario Pharmacists' Association. They come to us on Pharmacists' Day to showcase the many diverse services that pharmacists provide in today's health care system.

The pharmacists' interactive displays in room 228 show how they manage their expertise in drug and medication management to improve the health and well-being of Ontarians. Pharmacists help reduce asthma attacks, control diabetes and obesity, manage medication appropriately and much more. Ontario pharmacists play a key role in alleviating health care pressures. They are an accessible health care provider. They have the ability to outreach to patients and to collaborate with other health care providers to ensure Ontarians receive the best patient care within their community.

Recently, the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat partnered with the Ontario Pharmacists' Association to deliver safe-medication-use seminars for seniors across Ontario. The seminars involve a presentation by a community pharmacist and a question-and-answer period. Pharmacists have a wealth of information to share and to make a positive contribution to the health and well-being of Ontarians every day.

If you managed your medication well today, thank a pharmacist.

CONSUMER PROTECTION LEGISLATION

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): Unfortunately, I have to rise in the House today and bring to the House's attention the resurgence of what I consider to be irresponsible opposition in this House. This time, it concerns the delaying of Bill 70, the Consumer and Business Services Statute Law Amendment Act. This bill, if passed, will enforce stronger rules on fitness clubs. It will strengthen time-share disclosure rights. It will extend cooling-off periods. It will ban negative-option billing and bring a host of stronger remedies and enforcement powers.

This bill will address the issues brought up recently in the Hamilton Spectator. This is a bill that has the support of unions and the business community. The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Construction Council of Ontario supports it, TransUnion supports it, and the Ontario Chamber of Commerce supports it, just to name a few.

I would like to end by asking a simple question: Why are they opposed to getting these consumer protections in place? Why, yesterday in the House, did they not grant unanimous consent to bring the bill out of committee into this House? We called the bill yesterday at 6 o'clock, not at 6:45. The opposition didn't want to work here. No, they were too busy, maybe going off to a party or something. Instead, we could have had this matter settled. They denied the fact that all of us want this bill passed. Opposition? Boy—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FREDERICK BANTING HOMESTEAD PRESERVATION ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 PRÉSERVANT LA PROPRIÉTÉ FAMILIALE DE FREDERICK BANTING

Mr Wilson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 146, An Act to ensure the preservation of the Frederick Banting homestead / Projet de loi 146, Loi visant à assurer la préservation de la propriété familiale de Frederick Banting.

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

Mr Wilson?

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): The purpose of this bill, which I hope will be supported by all members of the House, given that Sir Frederick Banting was the first Canadian Nobel Peace Prize winner—his homestead is just outside of Alliston and, unfortunately, in the last few years it has fallen into a state of disrepair. It's deteriorating rather quickly.

The Ontario Heritage Society was bequeathed the property by Edward Banting for \$2 in 1999. They've let

the property deteriorate. As I said, this would allow the Minister of Culture to place a covenant on the property to ensure that, for ever and ever, it would be maintained as the Sir Frederick Grant Banting homestead.

PENSION BENEFITS
AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES RÉGIMES DE RETRAITE

Mr Levac moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 147, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act /
Projet de loi 147, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les régimes de
retraite.

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

Mr Levac?

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I would like to thank
legislative counsel Albert Nigro and my intern, Adam
McDonald, for the assistance they gave to me on this bill.

Police service personnel, through no fault of their
own, are losing huge sums of pension money because of
a flaw in the Pension Benefits Act. This bill will correct
that flaw. The bill amends the pension act by allowing
police officers transferred from municipal police services
to the OPP, or the other way around, to transfer their
pensions from one plan to the other. This is not possible
and seriously disadvantages officers whose municipa-
lities have chosen to contract out their police services
to the Ontario Provincial Police, or to move it back into
their realm.

This started as a constituency issue in 1999. Officers
Packer, Maxwell and Always brought this to my
attention, and I thought I'd try to help them on an
individual basis. It seems that we need to pass a bill in
order to correct that. I look forward to passing this bill
very quickly.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): On a point of order,
Speaker: I wish to correct my record of a couple of
minutes ago. I indicated that Sir Frederick Banting was
Canada's first Nobel Peace Prize winner. Of course, he's
Canada's first Nobel Laureate in medicine.

1350

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

ROAD SAFETY

**Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community
Safety and Correctional Services):** I rise in the House
today to pay tribute to a group of men and women who
protect our communities and help make Ontario an even
safer province than it is. I'm talking about the police

officers of this province who risk their lives every day
they report for work. They are in the vanguard. They are
the people we turn to when we are in trouble. They are
the people who are prepared to risk their own lives to
safeguard others. They are the people who are there for
us when we need them most.

Today, members of this House have had the oppor-
tunity to meet first-hand the representatives of more than
20,000 police and civilian members of police services
across the province. I'm talking about the Police
Association of Ontario, or the PAO. I want to acknowl-
edge that they are in the east gallery and we are delighted
to have them here today.

The PAO provides representation, resources and
support for 66 police associations. Just as the PAO and
its members are dedicated to making Ontario's com-
munities even safer, so is the McGuinty government.

Today, I have an important announcement that will
help make our streets safer for all drivers. The McGuinty
government is serious about highway traffic safety and
the safety and security of its citizens. We support a
consistent, fair and lawful approach to traffic safety and
enforcement across the province. Unsafe drivers should
not be allowed to circumvent the laws of the province.

Currently, motorists who are charged with offences
under the Highway Traffic Act have three valid options:
(1) they can plead guilty and pay the prescribed fine; (2)
they can plead guilty before a justice of the peace with an
explanation; or (3) they contest the charge in court.

Twenty-one municipal police services across the
province have been offering these drivers another alter-
native: traffic offender diversion programs, commonly
known as option 4 programs. Program implementation
varies among police services. The usual practice of police
services offering option 4 involves drivers attending a
course at the police service and either watching a video
or writing a true-or-false test on road safety. As such, a
person exercising option 4 does not have to admit guilt or
risk conviction by the courts. The driver does not face a
monetary fine. They do not receive demerit points or face
increased insurance premiums.

Because option 4 programs are not standardized across
the province, the Ministry of Transportation has no way
of confirming whether police services permit drivers to
complete the option 4 program more than once in the
same jurisdiction. They are not obligated to provide the
ministry with that information. There is no shared
database that lets police officers know they've stopped
someone who has been pulled over for the same infrac-
tion in other jurisdictions previously and has taken an
option 4 course.

Suppressing convictions from a person's record
hinders the identification of high-risk drivers. That's why
I'm asking all Ontario police services that currently offer
option 4 programs to cancel them effective January 1,
2005. Eliminating option 4 will make Ontario safer by
holding bad drivers accountable for their actions. These
programs aren't designed to improve safety on our roads,
they aren't effective in correcting driver behaviour, and

there is no standard program province-wide. Even the association representing the 20,000 front-line police officers in Ontario objects to these programs.

Here's what Bruce Miller of the Police Association of Ontario has to say: "Option 4 calls the administration of justice into disrepute."

The Canadian Automobile Association also objects to such programs and has called on the province to "quickly resolve what has now become an inconsistent two-tiered enforcement program."

The government supports innovative and effective means to increase road safety, but not at the expense of existing provincial laws designed to address these problem drivers. Option 4 programs don't work and they must stop. We expect the police services to adhere to this directive.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Here we've got another warm and cozy little announcement by the minister.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Not that warm, not that cozy.

Mr Dunlop: Warm and cozy.

It's a directive. Why don't you either create legislation or not? If you're against option 4, put legislation through. But any of the legislation we've seen from this government, let's review a little bit of it. Let's review some of the legislation. The grow op legislation was brought forward on a warm and cozy morning here one day. They did a big special announcement on eliminating grow houses. We've never seen the legislation come forward.

The mandatory gunshot reporting: We haven't seen that come forward either. Where has it been? My colleague from Leeds-Grenville brought forward that legislation in a motion, a resolution, last year. It was supported by this House, and we still haven't seen it come forward.

The 1,000 police officers: the \$200-million cost to the citizens of the province of Ontario. That is what the 1,000 police officers will be if you start to implement it today. We have \$30 million on the table with some kind of an action plan behind it.

Let's talk a little bit about option 4 and the removal of it. Just a few minutes ago, I talked to the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police. Again, of course, as usual, no one was consulted. The \$750,000 hole in the city of Barrie's police services budget: Who is going to make that up? I think the minister should bring forth legislation, remove this—if it's a tarnish on the police services industry, I think he should bring forward legislation, along with the money to help police services like the city of Barrie's replace the \$750,000 hole in their budget.

Again, here we go. It's a special day. The Police Association of Ontario is here, and I'm very pleased to see them. I've got a lot of friends in the PAO; with the general headquarters of the Ontario Provincial Police in my backyard, I've got to know a lot of people.

One thing I'm hearing from the people very clearly, and from police services, is that we have a lot of fancy announcements and no action. I want to know when the action is going to take place. Or is it like the pit bull legislation? You bring out a warm and cozy piece of legislation on pit bulls, and what happens? It turns into a nightmare across the province, as the Attorney General is likely finding out today.

We just got this legislation—I got this note, like, five minutes ago, so I didn't have a lot of time to really speak on it, but I did want to say a little bit about another piece of legislation that the minister promised: amendments to the private security guards. I have a bill, Bill 88, a private member's bill, that makes up for the Shand inquiry and implements all 22 recommendations. I don't see anything about that here. The minister, in the spring, promised legislation for this fall. Well, we've got five weeks left and we haven't had any legislation debated in the House. No legislation whatsoever has been debated, and we keep getting these little promises, like today; it's a directive. He is asking the police services of the province of Ontario to—he's directing them to obey his orders.

Just put a piece of legislation through. We'll likely support it, as long as the money comes with the piece of legislation to support our police services. The \$750,000: that's only one police service that I know of. I have no idea what it would cost in metro Toronto. Maybe we should contact Chief Fantino and find out what he's found out about this particular piece of legislation—I'm sorry, this particular directive.

I think what is important here is, again, no consultations, a smooth and warm, cuddly announcement on a day when the Police Association of Ontario is here. He is trying to make them happy and trying to comfort them for the lack of money that goes along with the 1,000 police officers, the \$30-million pittance. That's the type of thing we're hearing from this government. I hate to be negative, because I'm so supportive of the police services in the province of Ontario, but not under these rules and conditions, where it's all fancy announcements and no money to go with it.

I appreciate the opportunity to respond to this today.

Mr Kormos: On behalf of New Democrats here at Queen's Park, I'm more than pleased to respond to the Minister of Public Safety.

Look, we expected something from you today. We've got police officers from across the province here at the PAO lobby, so we knew the Minister of Public Safety was going to stand up and somehow address those police officers and attempt to reassure them that this government is finally, maybe, sometimes, perhaps, on their side, and this is what we get, this lukewarm, sort of pleading with the municipalities? "Please, if you don't mind, stop doing these option 4s, these shakedowns of drivers, these fleecings of drivers."

You have to understand why municipalities are doing it. Do you think they like doing them, Minister? Of course not; they're doing them because they have to, because they're forced to put cops out there doing fund-

raising; because these police services across Ontario are chronically underfunded and you have aggravated the scenario by downloading yet more on to them and not giving them the resources, the tools to do the job.

1400

You had a sad and miserable announcement a few weeks ago where you announced 1,000 new cops, and we learned in very short order, within a matter of mere minutes, that these weren't 1,000 new cops; they were 50-cent cops on a good day. Municipality after municipality after municipality has made it quite clear that they can't afford to buy into your scheme because they are already cash-strapped. You know full well that one of the most significant and ongoing tensions in municipality after municipality is between the chiefs of police advocating for their police forces, the police services boards and the municipal governments.

Policing is labour-intensive. We all know that. Policing costs significant amounts of money. We all know that. We in Ontario and in Canada have acquired the best-trained and most professional police anywhere in the world, but it doesn't come without investment. You, sir, have not been at all prepared to make that investment. You have been prepared to talk a big game when it comes to policing, but you don't deliver. When the rubber hits the road, you are nowhere to be seen.

Look at what municipality after municipality has said about your rather sad and feckless proposal for 1,000 new cops.

Sarnia Mayor Mike Bradley says it's too costly for the city.

Damian Parrent from the Niagara Regional Police Service is concerned about the municipality's capacity to pay what you would have as its share.

Herb Kreling of the Ottawa Police Services Board doesn't think the city is in a financial position to hire more officers, even if the province picks up half the tab.

The Timmins police chief says he won't be embarking on a hiring spree any time soon.

Mississauga Mayor Hazel McCallion described the plan as "a form of downloading" if the province doesn't fully fund the new officers.

The Hamilton Spectator notes, "Perhaps the Liberal promise book should have come with a disclaimer: 'Objects may not appear exactly as shown.'"

What did Liberals have to say about this 50-cent-on-the-dollar funding for new police officers? Well, in 1999, when the Conservatives claimed, again inaccurately, that they had hired 1,000 new police officers, one David Levac says, "Explain to me the 1,000 new police officers. I asked the police officers themselves, and I'm sure you heard it in private but you don't want to publicly announce it. The 1,000 is not translated into 1,000. I tried to optimistically say that's going to be 600 people. They said, 'You're way off, pal; it's more like 250 to 300 officers.' I want 1,000 police officers audited."

The fact is that, again, the best this minister can come up with is recycling of pathetic, empty and hollow Tory promises with respect to new police officers. Communi-

ties across this province expect you to give real support for policing in municipalities across Ontario. Police officers across this province are doing hard, dangerous work protecting property, saving lives and protecting public safety. They expect and deserve more from you and your government. They expect and deserve real support. When this government promised 1,000 new cops, the people of Ontario expected 1,000 new cops.

This government promised change, and all you've delivered is spare change to the people of this province. I say to this Solicitor General that the shakedown of drivers on option 4 programs isn't going to end because he is pleading with municipalities to do it; it will end if and when this government starts supporting municipalities in their efforts to develop strong, fully staffed, fully trained, fully resourced police forces across Ontario. Instead of making shabby, ill-conceived and poorly designed fluff-and-puffery statements here in the Legislature, why don't you start to deliver to police forces across Ontario so that we can maintain the high standards that people have worked so hard to build in this province?

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I would ask all members to join me in welcoming this group of legislative pages serving in the first session of the 38th Parliament.

They are Sushil Chanana from Peterborough, Katharine Cooke from Prince Edward-Hastings, Emma Dobson from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, Kay Dyson Tam from Toronto-Danforth, Adam Edgerley from Thornhill, Lee Follis from Brant, Danika Hawthorne from Parry Sound-Muskoka, Emma Hinton from Trinity-Spadina, Curtis Jones from Scarborough-Agincourt, Dever Jylha from York North, Nicholas Klimchuk from Hamilton West, Ellen Martin from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, Jane Michel from Oshawa, Savannah Nahwegahbow from Algoma-Manitoulin, Evan Odell from Mississauga South, Aisha Qureshi from Scarborough Centre, Nick Rogers from Ottawa-Orléans, Eric Schildroth from Kitchener-Waterloo, Laura St Marseille from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh and Daniel Walker from Parkdale-High Park.

Will you all welcome these new pages.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): I have a question for the Premier. I would like to ask you about the contract you signed with the Canadian Taxpayers Federation during last year's election campaign. You put your signature to two solemn promises in that document: One, not to increase taxes; and two, if you felt

it was necessary to increase taxes, you would not do so without the explicit consent of Ontario voters. Premier, we've heard your excuses for breaching a signed contract with respect to tax increases. Why did you also break your second signed promise, your commitment to seek the consent of Ontario voters?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): I had the opportunity to address this issue yesterday and I'm pleased to do so once again today. I want to remind my colleague opposite that on June 27, 2002, in this very Legislature, he, among many other colleagues of his in the Conservative Party, voted to break the Taxpayer Protection Act. The Leader of the Opposition now stands in his place and professes to be a champion of the Taxpayer Protection Act, the very act he and several of his colleagues broke in the past. This member, like this party, has no consistency and no credibility when it comes to these issues.

Mr Runciman: Once again, a non-answer from the Premier. He's pretty consistent in that respect, in any event.

Premier, your Liberal government now has two or three government lawyers in court at taxpayers' expense defending your political party's right to breach a signed contract. Your lawyers, at taxpayers' expense, have argued that this signed contractual promise by the Liberal Party of Ontario is no different than any other campaign promises, signed promises. You signed that contract with great fanfare. As a lawyer yourself, did you not understand the difference between a campaign platform promise and promises made through a signed contractual commitment? Or was it all political theatre where you knowingly and purposely hoodwinked Ontario voters?

Hon Mr McGuinty: The mistake we made on this side of the House was that we relied on a government financial document: the quarterly statement issued by that then government—this was released, by the way, just three weeks prior to the election being called—a document that specifically stated that there was no deficit, that the budget was balanced.

Doing our due diligence as much as we could, we estimated they were hiding a \$2-billion deficit. Never did we in our wildest nightmares suspect they would be hiding close to a \$6-billion deficit. The mistake we made, and the mistake we will ensure will never happen again in the province of Ontario, was that we relied on a government that was in fact hiding close to a \$6-billion deficit.

1410

Mr Runciman: That response had nothing to do with the question of a referendum, nothing whatsoever to do with the issue of a referendum.

Premier, today you said you intend to hold a referendum on the issue of democratic reform. You appear willing to hold a referendum when it suits your political purposes but reject one, even if it violates a signed contract, when it doesn't fit the interests of a tax-and-spend Liberal government.

Premier, it's not too late to honour your signed pledge. A referendum early next year will give Ontario voters the

opportunity you promised them to get their consent. If your so-called health tax is appropriate, it will be supported. If not, it will be rejected and the tax stopped. It's called democracy. You promised it. Demonstrate some integrity: Keep the promise and call that referendum now.

Hon Mr McGuinty: The member may not like it, but we're moving on and we're making profound changes in health care. We're transforming health care. We're investing in more nurses, more doctors, family health teams, MRIs, shorter wait lists for cataracts, cardiac care, cancer care, hip and knee replacements and the like. We are moving ahead. We're working in the interests of the people of Ontario. And no, we will not be held back by someone who lacks credibility and sincerity when it comes to honouring the Taxpayer Protection Act in the province of Ontario.

Mr Runciman: That response demonstrated complete disdain for the voters of Ontario—complete disdain.

PHOTO RADAR

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): My second question is to the Minister of Transportation. I want to revisit an issue that we raised with him yesterday to no avail; we got the usual non-response from that minister. It is with respect to your office working with an organization called the National Campaign to Stop Red Light Running.

Minister, this is a group that approached your office to organize a road safety event in support of photo radar. A member of your staff sent an e-mail to stakeholders across Ontario, and we have a copy of it here, lending your office's support for the event and inviting interested parties to speak directly with a photo radar company. Your office even went so far as to write the press release for the event on behalf of the organization.

The problem is, Minister, the organization is funded by companies that market and sell photo radar cameras at upwards of \$100,000 a pop. Undoubtedly, these companies stand to make a lot of money from your government if you bring back photo radar, which you haven't ruled out.

Do you believe that large photo radar companies should be using your office as a promotional tool to advocate for photo radar? Minister, try to answer the question today, please.

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): It might come as a surprise to the honourable member that we do talk to the stakeholders, and we do consult them before we make any decisions, unlike the other government that just went ahead and did things.

The red light camera discussion was no different from the other discussion that we had to consult with stakeholders, and that was the spirit this was done in. They sent us the release. We passed it on to the other stakeholders. That's all we did. There was nothing more done than that.

Mr Runciman: The minister's office has now been directly linked to an organization that advocates for, and

is funded by, photo radar companies. And it gets worse. We have an e-mail here today originating from your office, Minister, which refers stakeholders who are interested in this event to contact an unregistered lobbyist who's employed by one of the largest photo radar companies in North America. This lobbyist is not registered on the Ontario lobbyist registry, yet your office actively was supporting their event and working closely with them.

Minister, this is more than stakeholder relations; this is allowing your office to be used by a company that stands to make a lot of money from your government if you implement photo radar. How can you justify doing that?

Hon Mr Takhar: My number one concern is to make sure that the roads are safe in Ontario. Anything we can do to promote that we will continue to do. We will continue to work with our stakeholders to make sure we can provide the right information to drivers and all other stakeholders who will make our roads safer so that we can reduce fatalities on the roads, and in that respect, this was done.

Just for the record again, the red light camera was in fact introduced by the previous government. We made it permanent after the pilot project finished. We feel there are real advantages to doing that because it improves safety on the roads. There is nothing in this press release that is anything other than making sure it outlines the advantage of the red light camera.

Mr Runciman: His number one priority should be ensuring the integrity of his office, and clearly he's not doing that.

You're not answering the question. You're trying to divert attention with respect to this very serious concern. You have no answer to questions about a photo radar company, in fact one of the largest in North America, one that stands to make millions from your government, should you implement photo radar. I'll keep saying it: Why has it been allowed to operate through your office, to use your staff and government resources to promote their product? Again, Minister, why do you think it's appropriate for a company that is actively advocating for yet another tax grab, this time in the guise of photo radar, to be working through your office and using your resources to further their own agenda? Why is that appropriate?

Hon Mr Takhar: Let me just quote from what this member said about photo radar. He said, "Maybe we should take another look at photo radar in those areas to monitor that sort of thing because police cannot be there 24 hours a day, and that is part of the problem." He was referring to photo radar at that point in time.

I'm not sure what has changed since then that he now thinks photo radar shouldn't be there to promote safety. But in this case alone, there was a press release that was passed on to my ministry and we just passed it on to the other stakeholders so they would know what was happening on the red light cameras front. That's all we did. There was nothing more than that. That improves safety on the roads, and I think all should be concerned about safety on the roads.

HEALTH CARE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Premier, before and during the election, you promised you would not cut health care. After the election, you announced health care cuts to chiropractors, physiotherapists and optometrists. Today 600,000 ordinary Ontarians have sent you a clear message. They oppose your cuts to chiropractic care. They are sick of the McGuinty government's pay more, get less health care. Will you reverse your health care cuts, or did your promise not to cut health care mean nothing?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): I'm delighted to take the question. I have some sympathy for the many Ontarians who attached their names to that petition. It was not an easy decision, I can tell you, for us to have to reduce coverage for areas like chiropractic. But the fact of the matter is that we've got to make some difficult choices, and we will not shrink from that responsibility. My friend opposite may offer the kind of leadership where you tell people exactly what you think they want to hear, but we're saying that when it comes to health care in Ontario, we've got to make some difficult decisions, and we have chosen instead to invest in cancer care, cardiac care, hip and knee replacements and those kinds of things. Those are the kinds of decisions we've made in health care, and we've made them for the right reasons.

Mr Hampton: Talk about someone who tells people what they want to hear, "I won't raise your taxes," and then immediately does otherwise. Premier, you shouldn't lecture anyone.

I want to refer you to a respected medical journal, the Archives of Internal Medicine, which conducted a study of 1.7 million back-injury patients. The study concludes that covering the cost of chiropractic care reduces total health care costs by 1.6%. In Ontario, that means if OHIP covers the cost of chiropractic care to the tune of \$100 million a year, it saves \$480 million in total health care costs—one good study. Then there is a study by Deloitte and Touche, a firm that your health minister uses a lot, which says that your cuts to chiropractic will not save one slender dime.

Premier, you're very good at making promises. Do you have any studies or reports that support your broken promise?

1420

Hon Mr McGuinty: I'm sure the leader of the NDP would be interested in casting his mind back to their legacy when they had the privilege of serving in government. I don't recall the NDP making any of these promises, but unfortunately they delivered notwithstanding. They cut hospital funding by \$277 million. They cut OHIP funding by \$218 million. They cut funding for Ontario drug benefits by \$29.3 million. They cut funding—if you can believe this—for mental health by \$42.4 million. They cut long-term-care funding in Ontario—the only government ever to cut funding to long-term care—by \$6.1 million. They also cut funding for

community and public health by a whopping \$163.7 million. That speaks to the record of the member who raises these issues today.

Mr Hampton: If you want to talk about history, you might include that someone named Paul Martin, Liberal finance minister, cut health care funding by the federal government so much that he put every province in the hole.

But I want to ask about chiropractic care. This is a study by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, just completed.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. I'm having difficulty hearing the leader of the third party. I am applying the rules to ask the government House leader to be a little quieter because I cannot hear the leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: I don't think the McGuinty government wants to hear about these studies. This is a study by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, just completed. What it shows is that when injured workers with back injuries receive chiropractic care, they miss only, on average, nine days of work. When they receive other forms of medical treatment, they miss a median of 20 days of work. That is a lot of money out of the pockets of workers and it's a lot of money out of the economy.

Your health care cuts to chiropractic are thoughtless. They hurt workers, they hurt the economy, they hurt the health care system. Will you reverse your cuts, or is this just, once again, another broken McGuinty promise?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I want to thank the member from status quo once again for his representation. On behalf of that particular constituency, I can tell you that, no, we will not reverse that decision. It was a difficult decision, but it was the right decision.

Let me tell you another decision that we made which is the right decision. We've got close to one million Ontarians today who cannot find a family doctor for their own purposes. The reason we find ourselves in that mess, to a very large extent, is because when the NDP formed the government they reduced the number of medical spaces in our medical schools. What we are doing—and I'm proud to say this—is investing \$600 million over the course of the next four years to establish 150 new family health teams to bring primary care closer to the people of Ontario.

We're making some choices. We will not shrink from our responsibility to make difficult choices. We cannot be all things to all people. We're investing in those kinds of things which we think warrant greater priority—like cardiac care, cancer care, hips and knees, family doctors and nurses—and we're proud to do it.

CHIROPRACTIC CARE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Premier, you might want to know that once again it was a federal Liberal government that mandated that all

provinces cut the spaces in medical schools, and it was a federal Liberal government that continued that policy. But I want to ask you about chiropractic care, something you don't want to answer.

One of the people who is here today is Paul Leblanc. Mr Leblanc suffers from debilitating leg and foot pain. The pain got so bad it left him completely unable to walk and therefore having to rely on disability allowance. Chiropractic care helped Mr Leblanc put his life back together. Over the last two years, his chiropractic treatments have put him back on his feet. He can walk again, and he's looking forward to going back to work.

Chiropractic care makes a real difference. Tell Mr Leblanc and hundred of thousands of other Ontarians like him: Why are you depriving them of the hope and relief that chiropractic care delivers?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Just so we are perfectly clear here, when it comes to workers' compensation, WSIB covers those health care costs. That changes nothing with respect to chiropractic coverage—just so we're perfectly clear on that score, because this member opposite would have us believe something else. WSIB continues to cover health care costs for injured workers.

Mr Hampton: Mr Premier, I'm talking about all the other Ontarians who may not in the particular case have the advantage of WSIB coverage, and there are hundreds of thousands of them.

I want to refer to another one who is here today, Lucianna Viventi. She's a single mom with two kids. She suffers from a degenerative bone disease that causes her severe back pain and has done so for 20 years. At one point, the pain got so bad that her surgeon considered disc replacement surgery and spinal fusion surgery. But seeing a chiropractor has turned things around for Ms Viventi. With regular, affordable chiropractic care, she's been able to avoid these kinds of serious surgeries. Tell her, Premier, and the thousands like her in Ontario: Why are you depriving them of the hope and relief that chiropractic care delivers?

Hon Mr McGuinty: Again, so we're clear, the coverage that used to be provided was a total of \$150 for a year—for 12 months. I'm not minimizing how important that can be. But I can tell you as well that we're investing an additional \$2.4 billion in health care this year.

We're investing in high-priority areas. I know chiropractic coverage is important, but I can tell you that cancer care is very important to Ontario families. I can tell you that cardiac care is very important to Ontario families. Cataract care is very important to Ontario families. Having their sight restored and being able to lead a more productive life is very important to Ontario families. That's why we made that kind of a decision.

Mr Hampton: Premier, I hear your response, but do you know what? Those are just more McGuinty promises, and we've already had a track record of broken McGuinty promises.

These are real people. It's interesting you talk about cancer. Dolores Scandura is here today. She is a cancer

survivor, and right now she has to rely upon a disability allowance. In her long fight with this terrible disease, she has undergone gruelling treatments with painful side effects. Chiropractic care has helped her deal with the pain, but now, if she wants this most important treatment to make the pain much more bearable, she's going to have to find a way to pay out of her pocket. And let me tell you, for her, \$150 a year is something she can't afford.

Experts say you're wrong. Every study I've produced says you're wrong. People across Ontario say you're wrong. Will you reverse your cuts to chiropractic care? Or is this just another McGuinty broken promise?

Hon Mr McGuinty: We will not embrace, as my colleague opposite so willingly does, the status quo. We're going to transform health care. We're going to be making some decisions which are going to ensure that over the long term, health care is there not only for our generation, but for the next generation and the one after that. That's why we're investing \$2.4 billion more in health care this year than was invested year. That's why we put in close to \$1 billion more for hospitals alone. That's why we're working with hospitals to balance our budgets as part of a new collaborative process. That's why we're committed to reducing wait times in key areas like cancer care, cardiac care, cataracts, MRIs, CTs, hips and knees and the like. That's the approach we're bringing to health care. We're making difficult decisions. We will not defend the status quo, because we are committed to ensuring that health care is there for a long time to come.

1430

HEALTH CARE

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): A question for the Premier: You speak about being against multi-tiered medicine. You know that in your Ontario, if you're hurt in the course of your employment, you get chiropractic coverage. If you're hurt in an automobile accident, you get chiropractic coverage. But the change that you propose to make discriminates against people who haven't suffered their injuries in that kind of accident. And even worse than that, you discriminate depending on the type of care. When you bring in your amendment with respect to optometrists, you exempt patients on disability support, you exempt people on the Ontario Works program and seniors.

Premier, how on earth can you justify this type of discrimination in health care in Ontario? There are 600,000 people who signed that petition. When I was in Windsor this past summer, a blind woman came to me and said she goes to chiropractic care every couple of weeks. It keeps her going; it keep her mobile. Why discriminate against her?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The Minister of Health.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I appreciate the opportunity to repeat

some of the key messages that I think have been delivered here today. The fact of the matter is, in response to the question from the honourable member, the government is faced with making difficult choices. In a province where our drug budget, as an example, is under a 15% annualized pressure, costing this year something like \$400 million more, it's going to be necessary to make sure that we're focusing the appropriate amount of resources in priority areas like that.

We have worked through the life of that party's government. They increased the number of communities in Ontario that were underserved from the standpoint of having a family physician, to the point that when we came to office, nearly 140 communities were in such a position. We moved forward the priority of bringing new doctors to family practice in Ontario, addressing that critical priority for Ontarians. These are the choices that we're faced with making. They're difficult choices, as the Premier said, but they're the right ones for the future of health care in Ontario.

Mr Flaherty: That's certainly no compassion shown for disadvantaged people in Ontario who require chiropractic care. You ought to speak to your own—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. Minister of Community Services, Minister of Trade, order.

Now, where was I? Member for Whitby-Ajax.

Mr Flaherty: We're talking about—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Simcoe-Grey—that's the reason that I didn't know where I was. The member for Whitby-Ajax.

Mr Flaherty: I was speaking about the lack of compassion for persons suffering from conditions requiring chiropractic care in Ontario. For some reason, the people opposite seem to think that someone who is disadvantaged is entitled to optometry services but not to chiropractic services, which shows a fundamental misunderstanding of all the health care needs of the people of Ontario.

Let's talk about consultation. This Premier and this health minister pride themselves on consultation. The fact is, the government never once spoke to chiropractors or their patients about delisting. The first time the Minister of Health spoke to the Ontario Chiropractic Association was on June 20, more than a month after the announcement here. What about the people of the province of Ontario? The patients are the ones who matter here. Would you at least do the fundamental minimum thing, Minister, or would you at least, Premier, tell the minister to do the fundamental thing and consult with chiropractic patients in Ontario?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The honourable member's assertion that I didn't have a conversation with the chiropractors is as absurd as the assertions he made in the other two parts of his question.

The first is to have the audacity, as that member did, sitting as they are, two seatmates together, both of them proponents for two-tier medicine in the province of

Ontario, talking about that. And then to pile on with the audacity to talk about compassion, a man, a front-bencher in a government, who threatened to jail the homeless; a man who thought that the appropriate resolution to assisting people on welfare was to drug-test them; a man who was part of a government that arbitrarily reduced welfare rates for those most in need in our province; a man who was part of a government that eliminated the nutritional supplement for pregnant women; a man who was part of a government that stood by and did not increase—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Order, member from Whitby-Ajax.

Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Could I ask the members to address themselves in a manner that we can respect each other. Respect the person who is asking the question and respect the person who is answering. The heckling that goes on like this is not appropriate. I'm sure you can conduct yourselves in that manner. I am confident that you can.

I would like to proceed with question period. I think it's a new question. The member for Toronto-Danforth.

CONTAMINATED SOIL

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have a question for the Minister of the Environment. I have a question about water quality and contamination. Last week the city of Orillia started work on rehabilitating a toxic brownfield. They are planning to construct a big, new recreational centre. The people of Orillia want new infrastructure for recreation in their community and they want brownfields to be cleaned up and put to better use, and so do we. But citizens are very worried, and so am I, about this situation.

Contaminants far exceeding ministry standards have been found at the site. Excavation work started suddenly last week, before you had a chance to review requests to investigate this further, which you promised you would do. You were scheduled to release your decision on November 23, yet you allowed the work to start before you released that decision. Minister, I ask you, given all this information you have about the contaminants on the site, why have you let work already begin?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): This is a very important issue. Rehabilitating brownfields is good for the environment. The honourable member has indicated that contaminants on the site exceed normal values. That's why it's a brownfield. That's why it needs to be rehabilitated. That is why the Ministry of the Environment is working with the municipality to ensure that as the site is remediated, all appropriate safeguards are taken to ensure that the community is protected and that the groundwater is protected.

1440

Ms Churley: Minister, you've made me even more worried, given that answer. The toxic soil from this

former iron foundry site is filled with high levels of carcinogens and other chemicals. Some 40,000 tonnes of it are going into the regular—regular, not hazardous waste—municipal landfill right next to Lake Simcoe. It's a water quality issue. Preliminary soil tests found levels of vinyl chloride and other chemicals up to 80,000 times MOE limits. That's what this question is all about: where you're putting them.

Your spokesperson, despite that, was quoted today in the Orillia press saying you are "confident that the plan that's in place" will protect "the environment and health of the community."

Minister, given those high levels of toxic waste and the fact that you haven't seen a full assessment, why in heaven's name are you letting this go ahead so close to a water source?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: I'm very happy to speak to the member's question around what the Ministry of the Environment is doing to ensure that the environment is protected. Yes, there are very high levels of contaminants, not considered hazardous waste yet. If they were, they would be disposed of in a hazardous waste facility. However, the material that is removed from the site is being placed in separate windrows in the landfill facility. They are being tested every 30 metres for the levels of contaminants, and those levels of contaminants will be posted on the city of Orillia Web site so the public will have access to those results as soon as they are available from the testing labs, which is five days from the time the tests are taken.

I'm confident that all measures are being undertaken to ensure that the safety of the environment is protected in the community of Orillia and Lake Simcoe.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Ms Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): My question today is for the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. Yesterday, the government proudly launched the first ever Consumer Awareness Week dedicated to raising consumers' awareness about their rights and responsibilities in the marketplace. This is increasingly important, as Ontario consumers spend about \$125 billion each year.

Minister, would you please highlight how the government of Ontario is protecting Ontario consumers and how this new proposed law will affect both consumers and businesses alike?

Hon Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): I want to thank the honourable member for Hamilton West for her question. I was very proud yesterday, on behalf of the Premier and our government, to launch the first ever Consumer Awareness Week at the Eaton Centre. On Monday we talked about rights and responsibilities of consumers in Ontario in the 21st century. Today I was joined by the Ontario Real Estate Association, talking about how we can help consumers who are buying or selling their homes in Ontario. Tomorrow we are going to be dealing with Internet scams

and how individuals can protect themselves, and on Thursday with how we can help individuals who are traveling with the travel agency industry in this province.

We are very proud of the work we're doing. I want to thank the partners that have come together from the private sector, the public sector and our government ministries. We're showing leadership in terms of making sure that consumers are well educated and well armed to protect themselves against unscrupulous business people. I very much appreciate the interest and the work that the member for Hamilton West has done on behalf of her constituents.

Ms Marsales: In recent weeks, some media reports, particularly a five-part series initiated by the Hamilton Spectator, have surfaced regarding potential scams from unscrupulous fitness club operators. The upcoming holiday season is traditionally an important shopping season for consumer goods and services. In fact, the majority of gym memberships are purchased in the late fall and early winter. Minister, would you please explain how the current and proposed consumer protection legislation will help to eliminate these scams and help the people of Hamilton and the citizens of Ontario?

Hon Mr Watson: The member is quite correct. The current law, quite frankly, does not give that kind of protection to individuals who get ripped off by certain fitness clubs from time to time. This Bill 70 that is before the House will allow consumers to cancel arrangements with fitness clubs within 10 days and will double the fines to \$50,000 for individuals and \$250,000 for corporations that break the law. It will also allow our ministry to post convictions of those fly-by-night operators who are ripping off the public.

For the life of me, I don't understand why the NDP is supporting unscrupulous fitness clubs. I don't know why the NDP is turning its back on the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and the building and construction trades council, who want greater safety in the workplace. Why does the third party stand by and support those unscrupulous, door-to-door representatives who are ripping off senior citizens?

SHELTER SERVICES

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Premier. Today, we read in the Toronto Star that the city of Toronto paid \$850,000 for empty rooms that should have been shelters for people who needed them. Eighty per cent of that \$850,000 was transferred to the city of Toronto by the Ministry of Community and Social Services, and a good deal of that money comes from the regions in the greater Toronto area through pooling, \$80 million from York region alone.

Premier, I would like to ask you this question because the director of shelter services for the city of Toronto simply shrugged this off by saying this was a good deal. Do you believe it's a good deal and, if you don't, what steps will you take to ensure this never happens again?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I know the Minister of

Community and Social Services would like to speak to this.

Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): Let me assure this member that the city of Toronto is well aware, through an audit done on these programs, which is what identified this problem in the first place, dating back to the years 2001 through 2003. When this new mayor took office after the last mayoralty election, he stopped the practice. He looked at the audit that the city itself had called to determine that they need to know they are spending every single cent appropriately. When it was uncovered, it was clearly stopped immediately.

The mayor of Toronto, the Premier of Ontario, all of us share the concern. If we have one dollar that we're going to spend to help people most in need, it will be spent well.

Mr Klees: The chair of the region of York said this today: "We have our own social issues in York region and cannot adequately address our own residents' needs when our second-largest operating budget line item, behind policing costs, is pooling."

The minister indicates clearly that she's now satisfied and she'll trust the city of Toronto to do what's right. The chairman of the region of York is not prepared to give Toronto that same benefit of the doubt. Will the minister take the initiative to ensure that pooling—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order.

Mr Klees: —will be reviewed so that—

The Speaker: Order. Maybe I should let it be known that when I stand up and you continue to speak, you are not on TV and your voice is not being heard. I would like you to sit down when I stand up. In the meantime, I was trying my best to make sure that the government side, which was heckling, remained quiet so you could ask your question. I'm going to ask you now to put your question in 30 seconds.

Mr Klees: Can I have an undertaking from the minister that she will ensure that the entire issue of pooling is reviewed so that the regions in the GTA not only are required to transfer millions of dollars to the city of Toronto, but they also have a say in how that money is spent so that there's accountability to the regions for the funds they transfer?

Hon Ms Pupatello: Let me just be clear. One of the largest costs in social services that is pooled and that municipalities pay for is the IT system your government built, which was so wildly expensive, which far exceeds any costs that were anticipated, and you actually shared 50% of the costs with municipalities.

Let me suggest to this member that he was a minister at the cabinet table when they were reviewing social assistance, when that government created workfare. They actually created a system that prevents people from getting a job. That's what people wanted when—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Thank you. The member from Oak Ridges.

Interjections.

The Speaker: It seems to me that the only way I can—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. You were not able to finish that question, no. The only way I can get some order is to maybe start naming some members. I will start warning them, and naming them.

A new question.

1450

AUTISM SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. The Provincial Auditor's report shows that your autism program is in complete chaos. Some 1,200 kids were on a waiting list at the end of March. Children who got some IBI service were regularly shortchanged the hours they were promised. Some \$16.7 million that was budgeted for the program was never spent, some of that money under your government. The auditor also said your ministry does not have adequate oversight procedures in place to ensure that providers are spending funds to assist children and their families. Today we learned that an internal review that you ordered some six months ago has not been delivered and no one seems to have any idea when it will be completed.

I ask you, Minister, can you explain to families with autistic children why it is that you have no idea what is going on in this program and why they are not getting the IBI treatment they need?

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I would like to thank the member for the question. I'd like to thank the Provincial Auditor for his report, and we will look at the recommendations very seriously.

Our government supported the Provincial Auditor going in because we knew there were problems with this program. We knew that kids were waiting. We knew that children with autism were on waiting lists, and languishing on waiting lists that did not qualify for IBI. We have made changes even before the Provincial Auditor's report. The member opposite knows very well that I supported the Provincial Auditor going in. I was asking simple questions and not getting any answers. I was just as appalled as the member opposite.

But we didn't wait for this report. We have already gotten started in fixing the problems. We have already standardized the reporting procedures so that the wait lists will be standardized across the province. We are reaching 20% more children with autism under the age of six with a new investment of \$10 million for IBI therapy. We've hired 40 more to date. We have also doubled the number of transition coordinators, from 13 to 26, to help

children move smoothly from preschool programs into schools.

We supported the Provincial Auditor coming in. We support transparency.

Ms Martel: What the auditor made clear was that after a year in government this minister has no idea what is going on with this program in her ministry. That's the reality. For example, the Provincial Auditor reported that there were 1,200 children on a waiting list at the end of March, double the number of children actually getting service. Yet one of your staff members told the media today that it's not 1,200, that it's hundreds more than that.

The Provincial Auditor made some very important recommendations. Instead of implementing those recommendations, you have announced that you are going to have another review, the end of which we might see some time next spring.

Here is a report from the Ombudsman that was released in June. Here is the report from the Provincial Auditor that was released last week. Instead of ordering another review, instead of stalling and delaying even more, why don't you implement the recommendations from these two people and actually change the system so children can get the IBI service they need?

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: It's very interesting how this member is misinterpreting everything I have said. She asked for me to support this and I wholeheartedly supported the Provincial Auditor going in. This review was in place when we announced the new strategy.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Member for Nickel Belt.

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: This review is not a response to this Provincial Auditor's report. Everything I'm doing in this new ministry has an evaluation component to it. For the member opposite—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member from Nickel Belt, I'm going to warn you.

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: For the member opposite to insinuate that the review is in response to a report that was just tabled last week, Speaker, is disingenuous at the most.

This evaluation component has been in place for some months. The member knows very well that these evaluations take time. In the meantime, I'm going to take a look at the Provincial Auditor's report and implement the recommendations and take them very seriously.

The member knows very, very well that this government supports transparency. That's why we sent the Provincial Auditor in, and we'll do it again for any program that we are suspicious of having been mismanaged in the past.

The Speaker: Member for Peterborough.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Peterborough.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Nickel Belt. I'm naming the member for Nickel Belt. Order.

Ms Martel was escorted from the chamber.

ASSISTANCE TO FLOOD VICTIMS

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): My question today is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I'm concerned that there is some misunderstanding regarding the Ontario disaster relief assistance program and how it applies to Peterborough.

An article in the Peterborough Examiner of November 16, 2004, appears to be unclear on the process of how flood relief cheques will be issued by the province to the flood committee.

Minister, you will remember the Peterborough Examiner editorial of July 21 which stated that home and business owners can be covered for 90% of the eligible costs under the ODRAP program. Can you please inform my constituents how the program works?

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): Yes, I would be very pleased to set the record straight.

As the member knows, to date we have provided \$8.5 million to the city of Peterborough and the county, and the three adjacent municipalities. These advance payments are for municipal emergency cleanup, infrastructure repairs and early assistance to the victims of recent floods.

The ODRAP program has been around since 1965. It provides financial assistance to residents, farmers and small business owners who have sustained losses as a result of an occurrence like the flood this past summer. Under the program, the province will contribute up to \$2 for every dollar raised, to an amount necessary to settle all the eligible claims—up to 90% of all eligible uninsured private costs. I know that the relief committee has raised \$3.2 million so far. So all of the victims will be receiving the maximum amount that's available under the program.

Mr Leal: Thank you so much for setting the record straight. It certainly supports Mayor Sutherland's comment that, "the province has been phenomenal.... We've had our issues with the province in the past, but this is not one of those times." Mayor Sutherland understands that when the people of Peterborough and the surrounding area needed the province to respond quickly, the McGuinty government stood up to the plate—not a johnny-come-lately.

Minister, please inform my constituents how the McGuinty government and the Peterborough area flood relief committee have worked together to assist those members of my community to recover from this disaster.

Hon Mr Gerretsen: I'm very pleased to say that immediate action was taken. As a matter of fact, within three hours of the occurrence happening last July, Minister Kwinter and Dr James Young, the commissioner of emergency management, arrived on the scene in Peterborough. On the same day that the disaster relief

was applied for by the municipality, I was personally on hand to give them the down payment cheque of \$5 million.

To date, over \$2 million has been sent to something like 3,100 households, farms and small businesses. The Peterborough area flood relief committee has now adjusted all the claims, which are \$9.4 million, and as of November 18 will have completed its fundraising efforts, estimated to be a total of \$3.2 million. As a result of the committee's efforts, final cheques will be issued to all eligible victims by the end of November.

1500

PIT BULLS

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): I have a question for the Premier, if I can break in on his conversation. As the Premier around the cabinet table, you have ultimate responsibility for any legislation that you bring forward and table in this House. As such, I think you have the responsibility to respond to questions. You tend to refer them on a frequent basis, even if a minister has not done a good job.

I have a question dealing with a public safety issue, which the Premier has declined to respond to up to this point in time, and that's the need for real and meaningful dangerous dog legislation in Ontario, not the meaningless fluff put forward by the Attorney General to get him face time on the television networks. Premier, will you stand up today and indicate to this House that you will withdraw this terrible piece of legislation, this flawed piece of legislation, and introduce real, meaningful, effective dangerous dog legislation in Ontario?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I know the Attorney General will be very pleased to take that question.

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): "A weight has been lifted from my shoulders knowing that this legislation will reduce the chances of someone else being viciously attacked by a pit bull, as I have.... I commend"—the government—"for taking action and banning this particularly menacing breed of animal across Ontario," said Darlene Wagner, a letter carrier in Chatham who lost her right ear and broke both wrists as a result of an attack by two pit bulls. That's why we're doing that: to prevent further incidents like this.

Mr Runciman: We know how phoney this minister is. We saw it on CityTV when they asked him to point out a pit bull. He pointed to one that he had been trained to point to, and CityTV had changed the face. So he didn't know, and that's a fact. He doesn't know because he didn't consult, he didn't talk to anybody. He didn't talk to experts. He has no idea—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I'm going to warn the Minister of Health, the Minister of Education and the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. I need order in this House.

Mr Runciman: Their main criterion is what looks good on the nightly news, not what makes sense, what really works. That's the case in point here. I ask the minister to stand up, pull back from this, talk to all of the organizations, all of the experts in this area who are opposed to this and say it's bad legislation. What happens if we have a spate of Doberman or Rottweiler attacks? He is not dealing with dangerous dogs. That's what we're concerned about—dangerous owners. He's not dealing with how you fund this, how you enforce this. I ask the minister to pull back—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon Mr Bryant: We have consulted with all those groups, and we've heard from them. I understand the member seems to be getting some opposition. The legislation the government "is proposing makes our playgrounds, sidewalks and neighbourhoods safer.... It is clearly in the best interest of public safety and it will help to protect our officers who face these vicious animals when carrying out their duties." Who said that? Chief Julian Fantino.

ASSISTANCE TO DISABLED

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question again is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Yesterday, I asked you what I thought was a very simple question, so I'm going to try it again today. On October 21, you assured this House that you would review the Chenier case for a sales tax rebate on the new van to transport their disabled child. My executive assistant has been in constant contact with your special assistant Dave Momotiuk on the following dates: October 13, October 18, October 21, October 28, November 2 and again today. In fact, I wrote to you directly on October 28 to reinforce what was being said. You have yet to respond. You have yet to live up to the word you gave this House. I am asking you today. Instead, your office has sent Mr Chenier back to the March of Dimes. This is not what you promised to do on the 21st. It's not what you agreed to do in this House. I'm asking you again, are you prepared to review this issue yourself and make a decision on behalf of this family?

Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I'm very happy to once again address this issue. What we did was improve the home and vehicle modification program to actually expand the program to include, for the first time in Ontario, assisting families with children with disabilities. That's very important, because we need to expand services to all Ontarians who are vulnerable and need help.

When this particular member asked a question in the House, the reason his office has been in such contact with my special assistant is because our office keeps calling this member for more information that apparently he doesn't want to divulge. So we went through our eastern MPP, our own Jean-Marc Lalonde, to actually get the name of the family. My eastern office for the region

actually called the family directly. What we understand is that the family was told not to call the March of Dimes, in fact, to try to make this a political issue, which is really a shame, because what I see again in this House is that we want to help people. We need to understand pieces of information. They may actually still qualify for the tax rebate. That's why information is so important.

Mr Prue: Madam Minister, I don't need a lecture from you, but I think maybe you need to give a lecture to Mr Momotiuk to actually do the job that you've hired him to do.

But I want to ask you another question, because I heard the Minister of Consumer and Business Affairs today talking about the new complaints system. I want to send this complaint to Mr Chenier and I want you to tell him whether he should answer the following questions:

Who has given false information on the Web site that he relied on? That's question number 4. I think maybe, you know, the government has some responsibility.

Question number 9: "Briefly describe your concerns about the business." They advertised a product that was not available.

Number 10: What do they want the government to do, or the business to do? "Honour your commitment as advertised"—I'm going to suggest he write that.

If this is good enough for the businesses, it should be good enough for your government, and you should do the right thing. You should apologize to him and you should take the action that you expect business to do.

Hon Ms Pupatello: What's really critical when we're trying to deal with a tax credit program is that there's some basic information we need to have, basic information like family income. That's why we were asking this MPP to give us information to allow us to contact the family, which we eventually did on our own anyway. What we do know is that this family may well qualify not just for the program of tax credits that still exists to some extent, but also through the March of Dimes. This ministry is there to help people in need. What we need is information—contact information, income information etc—that we repeatedly asked for. I'm not going to play games and drag a family through this House, because we want to get to the bottom of whether they would actually qualify for help. That's what we've done and we will continue to do, regardless of where they come from.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): That brings us to the end of oral questions.

Hon Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Today in the Hamilton Spectator I have one quote—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Watson: I'm sorry, Mr Speaker. Howard said, however—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Again, I rule on points of order, not you.

First, I couldn't hear the member.

Interjections.

The Speaker: What you raised wasn't a point of order. Are you asking for unanimous consent about—would you state it, please?

Hon Mr Watson: Given what I just read, I'd seek unanimous consent that Bill 70 be discharged from the standing committee, with third reading this afternoon and a final vote at 6 pm this evening. Clearly the NDP indicated they were not being obstructionist, so I'd like to—

1510

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

I think what I heard is that you're asking that Bill 70 be discharged from committee. I didn't hear anything else. Is that what you're asking for?

Hon Mr Watson: That it be discharged from standing committee, with third reading this afternoon and the final vote at 6 pm this evening. This is the same motion the NDP claimed they were not trying to obstruct.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Are you speaking to the same motion?

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Mr Speaker, on a point of order—

The Speaker: I have a point of order I'm dealing with now. I am dealing with a point of order, please.

I think, when you asked for unanimous consent, I heard a no.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Do you have a point of order? Okay. It's time for—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Could we get some order here, please.

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: Does Hansard record that it was the NDP who said no to the unanimous consent motion?

The Speaker: That's not a point of order. You should know better than that.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'm going to go to petitions, and I'll recognize the first person who will stand up, not who is standing.

PETITIONS

PIT BULLS

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas aggressive dogs are found among any breed or crossbreed, and

“Breed-specific legislation and breed bans are not effective solutions to the problem of dog attacks; and

“The problem of dog attacks is best dealt with through a comprehensive program of education, training, and

legislation encouraging responsible ownership of all breeds,

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to refrain from enacting provincial animal control legislation that is breed specific, and instead, implement a comprehensive bite prevention strategy that encourages responsible ownership of all breeds.”

I affix my signature to this.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas,

“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;

“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;

“Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

“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.”

This has been signed by over 300 residents of Ontario, and I affix my signature as well.

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario regarding support for chiropractic services in the Ontario health insurance plan.

“Whereas,

“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;

“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;

“Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

“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 send this to you by page Savannah.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I have about 500 names from the Markdale Chiropractic Centre and it's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario regarding support for chiropractic services in the Ontario health insurance plan.

"Whereas,

"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;

"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;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"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've also signed this.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have a mere few hundred of the literally hundreds of thousands of petitions that have come in on this subject, and you're hearing some of them today. It reads:

"To: Legislative Assembly of Ontario

"Re: support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan:

"Whereas,

"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;

"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;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"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 will sign this petition because I fully support it.

REFUNDABLE CONTAINERS

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have an interesting petition. I know that you too will agree with this

one. It's to this assembly and to the Minister of the Environment.

"Whereas we find lots of pop cans and beer bottles in our parks and children's playgrounds;

"Whereas it is, therefore, unsafe for our children to play in these parks and playgrounds;

"Whereas many of these bottles and cans are broken and mangled, therefore causing harm and danger to our children;

"Whereas Ontarians are dumping about a billion aluminum cans worth \$27 million into landfill" sites "every year instead of recycling them;

"Whereas the undersigned want to see legislation passed to have deposits paid on cans and bottles, which would be returnable and therefore not found littering our parks and streets;

"Whereas the province of Quebec already has legislation obligating the vendors to accept the refund on all pop drinks, whether bottles or cans;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, strongly urge and demand that the Ontario government institutes a collection program that will include all pop drinks, bottles of beer, wine, Tetra Pak juices and can containers to be refundable in order to reduce littering and protect our environment."

Since I wholeheartedly agree with this petition, I will certainly sign it.

LANDFILL

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): These people are appealing to the Liberal government to halt Toronto garbage coming to Haldimand county.

"Whereas the new Adams Mine Lake Act—as of June 17, 2004—amends the Environmental Protection Act to prohibit waste in a lake; and

"Whereas in the act, 'lake' results from human activities, and directly influences or is directly influenced by groundwater; and

"Whereas Edwards landfill is to be 15 acres excavated 29 feet in a wetland/slough forest;

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

"Halt the Edwards landfill site excavation."

I agree with the 1,500 people who have signed these petitions, and I sign my name.

1520

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I have a couple of hundred names attached to this petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas,

"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;

"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;

“Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

“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 support this petition and I will sign my name to it.

ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK

Mr Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to read the following petition:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there is no established province-wide standard to deal with anaphylactic shock in Ontario schools; and

“Whereas there is no specific comment regarding anaphylactic shock in the Education Act; and

“Whereas anaphylactic shock is a serious concern that can result in life-or-death situations; and

“Whereas all students in Ontario have the right to be safe and feel safe in their school community; and

“Whereas all parents of anaphylactic students need to know that safety standards exist in all schools in Ontario;

“Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, request that the McGuinty government support the passing of Bill 3, An Act to protect anaphylactic students, which requires that every school principal in Ontario establish a school anaphylactic plan.”

I'm pleased to fix my signature to this petition.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I have a petition given to me by David Anderson, who is a councillor in the town of Minto. I want to thank him for circulating this, and it reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas many volunteer fire departments in Ontario are strengthened by the service of double-hatter firefighters who work as professional, full-time firefighters and also serve as volunteer firefighters on their free time and in their home communities; and

“Whereas the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association has declared their intent to ‘phase out’ these double-hatter firefighters; and

“Whereas double-hatter firefighters are being threatened by the union leadership and forced to resign as volunteer firefighters or face losing their full-time jobs, and this is weakening volunteer fire departments in Ontario; and

“Whereas Waterloo-Wellington MPP Ted Arnott has introduced Bill 52, the Volunteer Firefighters Employment Protection Act, that would uphold the right to volunteer and solve this problem concerning public safety in Ontario;

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

“That the provincial government express public support for MPP Ted Arnott's Bill 52 and willingness to pass it into law or introduce similar legislation that protects the right of firefighters to volunteer in their home communities on their own free time.”

It's signed by a significant number of my constituents. I, of course, have signed it as well.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I have the following petition:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Re: support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan:

“Whereas,

“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;

“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 elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to the government of 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.”

It's signed by approximately 150 people, mostly from the Barrie area. I am in agreement and I affix my signature thereto.

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it's regarding support for chiropractic services in the Ontario health insurance plan.

“Whereas,

“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;

“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;

“Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a

cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

“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.”

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): I have a petition from 2,601 individuals in the riding of Lanark-Carleton regarding chiropractic services in the Ontario health insurance plan.

This petition is similar to others we've heard. It talks about 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic service and now will no longer be able to get it. Those with reduced ability to pay, including seniors, will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices. It talks about the costs to the government overall being over \$200 million, and the fact that there was no consultation with regard to it.

They ask the Legislative Assembly to reverse this decision announced on May 18 in the provincial budget, and to maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services.

I have signed that petition.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Simcoe North has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Transportation concerning photo radar lobbies. This matter will be debated at 6 pm.

OPPOSITION DAY

LIBERAL CAMPAIGN PROMISES

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): I move that the Legislative Assembly call upon the government,

To fulfill the promises made by Liberal Party leader Dalton McGuinty during the 2003 election, according to the original cost estimates as provided by the Liberal Party of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Mr Runciman has moved opposition day number 3.

Mr Runciman: I appreciate the opportunity to participate in what I think is a very timely debate, given the fact that the Canadian Taxpayers Federation has taken the government to court. Those proceedings began this week in terms of the violation of the signed pledges made by the Liberal Party of Ontario and, more specifically, the leader of the Liberal Party, Mr McGuinty, during last fall's campaign. Mr Speaker, I'm sure you recall that

event. You may even have attended. I'm not sure. I think I saw your face in one of those pictures, although you may not want to have it publicly acknowledged at this point. If that's the case, I apologize.

Given what's happened with respect to the failure to meet those signed commitments, those signed pledges, I think we've heard in the House, for some months now, the Premier and his ministers stand in their place and defend breaking these signature promises, these signature pledges, pointing to the fact they were facing a financial situation that was unexpected. We can debate that until the cows come home.

We believe strongly on this side of the House that we would have balanced the budget. The Liberals took office and spent like Liberals. They increased spending by over \$4 billion in the six months they governed during the last fiscal year.

1530

But in any event, that's an excuse they continue to use, and they've gained some mileage. The media have accepted it as the gospel, even though it is not a fact. The real fact is that the Conservative Party, if we'd retained power, would have had another balanced budget.

The other element of the signed pledge which Mr McGuinty and his cabinet colleagues and other members of the Liberal Party refuse to talk about, refuse to acknowledge, refuse to respond to questions in this House—and we saw another example of that today when I asked the Premier a specific question about the second element of that signed pledge, and that was the commitment that if indeed the government concluded that for whatever reasons they had to raise taxes, they would go to the people, they would explicitly request the support of the people of Ontario for any tax change, any tax increase. They can talk about the unexpected challenges they faced, and you can accept that or not accept that. But if you look at the other element of that signed commitment, that signed pledge to hold a referendum, they have no excuse. They have no justification for not fulfilling that promise.

Why did they not call a referendum? Why did they not keep that promise? Why did they not give the voters of Ontario an opportunity to have input, have views expressed on that very critical issue? They talk about democratic reform. They get up on their high horses day after day: “We believe in democratic reform. We believe in MPPs having the ability to speak out.” But we see the lie put to that every day by their own MPPs getting up and speaking the government line, not defending cuts in health care to hospitals in their own ridings; getting up again and spewing the government line, not standing up acting as independents; following the so-called direction, which proves to be not much direction at all with respect to having freedom to operate and freedom to represent your own constituents within the Liberal Party. That's just not happening.

I want to talk about this issue because I think it's very important. The Liberal government has imposed this very significant tax hike on Ontario citizens, breaking a sig-

nature promise. A record tax increase in the province of Ontario, yet they failed miserably to consult, and breaking another very important promise. The lawyers who are representing the government in this lawsuit process are government lawyers. I'm not sure what they're paid. We know they both are paid well over \$100,000 a year. We know there are other government lawyers supporting them. I think the average is around \$195 an hour for them to defend the Liberal Party. The taxpayers are footing the bill for the Liberal Party to defend breaking two signature promises, two key promises, that got them elected to government. That's shameful.

The ministers and the Premier and his lackeys in the back rows all laugh at these kinds of issues, while the Premier sits up in Rosedale in a \$750,000 home paid for, supposedly, by the Liberal Party of Ontario. The reality is, we know those are donations to the Liberal Party of Ontario, and people who make those donations get tax receipts, tax rebates for up to 75% of the money contributed to the Liberal Party of Ontario. So I think we can make a very valid argument—certainly the Liberals did it when they were on this side of the House—that the people of Ontario and taxpayers you're imposing this tax on paid for those posh quarters in Rosedale that the Premier of Ontario now inhabits. Is that right? Is that right? No, it's not right.

The Premier of Ontario, who imposes this heavy, heavy tax on Ontario citizens without giving them the right he promised them to vote on it, also goes to the barber and spends \$50 for a haircut. This is not a Premier. This is a president. He thinks he's a president. He's behaving in a presidential manner. That's wrong and the people of Ontario know it's wrong.

He said he was going to support working men and women, working families in this province. He is not supporting working men and families. He's imposing a heavy tax burden on them and throwing out a solemn commitment he made to consult them, to get their advice and to get their input.

This government and this Premier do not believe in democratic reform. What they believe in is surface politics. We see it in this pit bull bill. This is a joke—a sad, sick joke, especially on the families who have suffered attacks from vicious dogs—a very sick joke. This minister should be resigning over this legislation. We should be dealing with dangerous dog attacks, not responding to what's going to look good on the nightly news. The Attorney General is renowned for caring about what looks good on the nightly news, not meaningful public safety legislation.

We saw it in the “bring your own booze” legislation where the consumer minister, gets up—and they both issued press releases—saying, “MADD supports us. All of these organizations support us.” In reality, they didn't even consult them. They did not consult them. They didn't talk to them at all. They told them, “This is it. It's a fait accompli, but we're going to put in a press release that you support it.”

The Attorney General did the same thing with pit bulls. Now we hear organization after organization,

humane societies, veterinarians, totally disagree with this. They think it's wrong-headed. That's the growing trademark of this Liberal government, seat-of-the-pants operations. They're totally incompetent. The Premier doesn't have the guts, the intestinal fortitude, to stand up and get rid of a minister like that.

Withdraw that terrible legislation and do the right thing.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): It's a pleasure to debate the motion brought forward by Mr Runciman. I can tell you that we in the third party were shocked as well with regard to the performance of this government, with regard to its broken promises and its weak leadership that we've seen so far in Ontario. We see it every day here in the Legislature. Certainly this motion is one that's well timed in terms of the kinds of things we have to deal with on a regular basis.

I want to make a couple of initial statements in regard to some quotes my leader has made in this Legislature with respect to this issue. One speaks directly to the way people in Ontario are receiving this government's performance. “During the last 12 months, ordinary Ontarians who chose change have learned the hard way that when it comes to weak leadership, excuses and broken promises, Dalton McGuinty takes the cake,” NDP leader Howard Hampton said. “During the election, he promised a better deal for ordinary Ontarians, better services and no new taxes. He said we could have our cake and eat it, too. But now all he's got to say to all those Ontarians who voted for change is, ‘Let them eat cake.’” That's what Howard Hampton said. Quite frankly, that in a nutshell really speaks to the problems the people of Ontario—the people of Hamilton East—are telling me they have with this government. The bottom line is, 231 election promises broken is just not enough.

Not to raise taxes? We know that one went out the door right away. We know that, in one short year, the McGuinty Liberals broke faith with Ontario voters. That's all we can call it: they broke faith. They broke faith on very many levels, not only in terms of particular policy areas they had promised they were going to go in, but then also major promises, major commitments that they made around the whole system of taxation and whether or not regular ordinary Ontarians would be seeing an increase in taxes.

Many of these issues came to light for me probably right after the election took place in October. But if you go through the list, which I don't happen to have in front of me, but hope to within the next little while, it starts off very clearly with the reversal, the rollback of the decision on the Oak Ridges moraine.

I come from a community that's now looking at current legislation. Granted, there are many good pieces to that that are coming forward, but really when the first step on an environmental issue is a misstep, it gets people in communities across the province worried about the real commitment this government has to environmental issues. When thousands of houses are given the green

light on the Oak Ridges moraine, people just shake their heads in wonderment, trying to figure out what exactly the government meant when, only a few short months prior to that, they were promising to halt development on the Oak Ridges moraine.

What about tolls on the 407? That was another key promise that was broken.

1540

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I'd like to ask for unanimous consent to discharge section 1 of Bill 70 from committee and to vote on it immediately so that in Hamilton, the consumers can be protected. We can make it the law right now if we could have unanimous consent.

The Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent? No.

Interjections.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I would ask for unanimous consent for the Legislature not to sit tonight, in view of the fact that you, Speaker, are holding a dinner for all female members of the Legislature. I'm on duty in here tonight; one of my bills is up and I have the lead on it. I think that this is important to women, and I would ask for unanimous consent so that all women in this chamber are free to attend.

The Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent?

I heard a no.

Interjection.

Ms Horwath: I just wanted to continue my—

Hon Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I want to give another opportunity to the member for Hamilton East, that we bring Bill 70 back from committee, that it be debated at third reading and the vote be held at 6 o'clock this evening. I think that's a fair suggestion.

The Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent?

Interjections.

The Speaker: No.

Order. It seems to me this matter is—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The minister has raised it and many people have raised that same matter. Maybe I'll ask the House leaders to get together and work out some agreement so we can settle it, rather than disrupting the House from time to time on these matters.

May I then ask the member from Hamilton East to continue her debate.

Ms Horwath: Nonetheless, back to the matter at hand, which is the issue of the many broken promises of the Liberal government and the motion that was brought forward today, on opposition day, to deal with some of the issues the opposition thinks are important. Of course, one of those is all the broken promises of the Liberal government.

I was starting to say, before I was interrupted by the various points of order that came forward, that one of the next key election promises that was broken by the Liberal government was the promise they had made on the 407 tolls. Quite frankly, that is still an extremely frustrating

and sore issue for people. There have basically been no real efforts, no real attempt, no real action in regard to making sure that that promise had been kept; in fact, it's a complete reversal in regard to whether or not the government was actually going to be able to implement any kind of real control over the rapidly rising tolls on the 407.

Of course, the list is massive, and I'm just going to continue to bring up various issues that have arisen, affecting my community and others. One of them is the issue of the hydro rate cap, and that's another one that came up very quickly, almost immediately after the election. The government didn't make good on that promise and still hasn't made good on that promise. In fact, right now, in Hamilton East, we have calls coming to my constituency office on a regular basis in regard to people's inability to pay the rising costs of hydro. Rather than actually address the substantive concern that people have with this issue, the minister continues to go down the path of privatization of this sector, continues to increase the amount of money that regular Ontarians are paying for hydro and, in fact, not deal with the reality that there needs to be some real examination and review of the Ontario Energy Board's ability to make regulations that require hydro corporations to deal fairly with people who are in low-income situations and are unable to keep up with their bills, and who are then slapped with a thousand different charges, fines, reconnection fees and security deposits. So they're not only having their initial difficulty in terms of not being able to pay the presenting bill, but then all of a sudden they have enormous amounts of extra charges heaped on their account. It really becomes absolutely impossible for people to make those payments and to dig themselves out of the hole.

Yes, certainly at the beginning people might have some problems with paying their bills, and that's something that is regrettable. But to then further penalize people, to further dig them into a hole, to further push them into a corner, is just unacceptable. It's just not an appropriate way to deal with a very difficult situation, when we know that particularly people who are most vulnerable, people who are most challenged in terms of their ability to pay, are the ones who are getting stuck with the greatest amount of charges and the greatest number of requests for security deposits. That's the case with hydro and that's certainly the case with gas. Quite frankly, it's something that needs to be addressed by this government.

But that's not all when it comes to broken promises, as we all know. We know that there was also a promise made around insurance rates. I believe that was a promise that people really did expect some action on. Unfortunately, it's yet another promise that was broken. I know that as a result of just the fact that there's been inaction by the government on this particular issue, the rates are up; they're up everywhere. The government will continue to come into this House and claim that there are all kinds of people who have reductions in their insurance rates. I'll tell you that I haven't met a single one. I have not met

a single person, personally, who has come to me and said, "My auto insurance rates are down. What a great thing the government has been doing on auto insurance rates." Quite frankly, if there's a list of Ontarians whose auto insurance has gone down significantly with this government's inaction, I think it will be a very big surprise to the vast majority of members of this Legislature. Nonetheless, that's just another broken promise and another thing that has not been accomplished by the government.

We can talk more and more about the various pledges that this government has broken. How about the one that we talked about earlier, that we've talked about several times, in fact, and that we've seen petition upon petition on: "We're going to improve the health care system"? We heard from our leader today during question period that injured workers are now making significant comments around the fact that their ability to obtain the health care services they need to deal with injuries that are workplace-related cannot be afforded in the same way it could be afforded before. Why is that? Because, with no consultation, with no discussion, with no opportunity for the communities across this province to have any say on the matter, arbitrarily, the government just decided they were going to delist chiropractic services. That was done, from my perspective, on the backs of people who are not able to pay for those services, on the backs of people who are trying to take proactive health care measures in their own personal lives, proactive health care measures like chiropractic and physiotherapy. These things are problematic. That's yet another broken promise that this government has made.

There are many, many more. I don't have the list in front of me, but I think about the P3 hospitals, which is another one. There's quite a lot of evidence that the people of Ontario are extremely disappointed and unhappy with the way things are happening in the province and with the number of broken promises this government has continued to make. It's extremely disappointing. I think when the people of Ontario thought they were choosing change, they didn't realize that what they were really choosing was a government that had no real commitment and no real desire at all to keep their promises to the province.

1550

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): Today's date is November 16. Just a little more than a year ago, our government was asked, and given the privilege and responsibility, to form a government and fulfill commitments we made during an election campaign to the people of this province. I know my colleagues on my side of the House will be prepared to be judged by the citizens of this province, come election day.

It certainly is the job of opposition to oppose, and we know that's what today is about: It's opposition day. But it is also the responsibility of the opposition to inform themselves, to be accurate with what has occurred, and not to be disingenuous with what our government has

accomplished. So although my friend did not have a list in front of her and was unable to talk about many of the accomplishments of our government, my colleagues on the opposite side will perhaps be pleased to know that I do have a list, and I look forward to spending the next few minutes talking about what our government has accomplished over the last year and the key priority areas that our government has worked on for the last year.

I want to start with one of our priority areas: education. We committed—and I look at the language of the opposition day motion—to fulfill the promises that we've made. What did we promise? We promised to increase student achievement in literacy and math. And today, more than 7,500 elementary teachers began the year with specialized training in reading and math instruction as part of our government's effort to boost student literacy and numeracy in those all-important early grades.

What else did we commit to? We promised that this province would have smaller class sizes. And today, school boards have hired more than 1,100 new teachers as a first step to reducing class sizes in the province. We also have 1,300 more schools that have smaller class sizes in the early grades.

What else did we commit to in the election campaign? What other promises did we make? We said we would bring peace and stability into our schools. The Ontario College of Teachers will be revitalized and depoliticized with the actions of our Minister of Education, but with a clear majority of classroom teachers on the college council.

We have also started treating teachers like the professionals they are, with responsibility for our future brightest minds in this province, by the Premier's Awards for Teaching Excellence. We are celebrating the contributions of exceptional teachers, principals, vice-principals, educational support workers in all of our classrooms, in all of our schools across all of this province in all of our communities.

We committed to and we have repealed the acrimonious PLP. Legislation to repeal the professional learning program was introduced in the spring and, if passed, this Professional Learning Program Cancellation Act, 2004, would remove the requirement for teachers to complete 14 courses every five years to maintain their Ontario teaching certificates. The ministry will work with teachers on an entirely new approach for professional development, because we respect teachers as professionals and we know that they want to and have always conducted and undertaken professional development.

As part of a new co-operative approach to making progress in our schools, the education partnership table has been launched and is continuing to provide diverse insights from the education sector on all provincial education policy early in our government's policy development. We go to those experts in the field who are working in these important sectors and ask them first. To hear my friends across the House talk about our lack of consultation—I think they have perhaps been asleep for the last year, because this government has certainly

spoken to those who are expert in the area and asked for that information.

What else have we accomplished in our first year? The list is so long, I'm concerned that I will not in the time allocated have a chance to go through everything I want to talk about. We have also helped those students who need it the most with an additional \$65 million through the learning opportunities grant, which will improve education achievement for students from low-income or single-parent families, with low parental education, or those who have recently settled in Canada. We know that students in those families need special help. We made those commitments in the election campaign and we have met them.

We have also committed and have met the commitment to support our French-language schools. French-language schools began this year with an increase of \$30 million to help offset the additional costs and challenges that their boards face in meeting the needs of a diverse student population.

We committed to listen to Dr Rozanski, and 80% of education investments for both stability and student success recommended by Dr Mordechai Rozanski will be met by the end of this year. Those are some of the commitments that we have undertaken, many of the commitments and promises that we have kept in this first year, and I say, we are only just beginning.

I want to turn to another very important area for our government, and that is the area of health care, and talk a little bit about what we have done in our first year. We have come forward with a sound commitment to universal health care, to a sustainable health care system, one that will be responsive to the needs of this generation and the next, that will be there, that will focus on health and improvement of health for all Ontarians. That is a new day in the transformation of health care.

We said we would make sure that we committed to medicare, and that it was here for future generations, and to improve and protect universal health in Ontario. We passed the commitment to medicare act. To address the number one killer in Ontario, we are working to make public places and workplaces in Ontario smoke-free within three years, including raising tobacco taxes.

We also know that for our system to continue into the future, we need to make sure that it's sustainable and that it's accountable. To improve accountability in the health care system and to provide better service to the public and to all of our constituents in all of our communities, we announced our support for the National Health Council, and we have created and will create our own Ontario health council.

We committed to shorten waiting times. To shorten those waiting times, we are investing public dollars in new public MRI machines, buying back the old MRI machines and extending their hours to reduce wait times. We promised we would do it, and we are delivering on that. To shorten wait times and improve access, we have announced over \$1 billion in additional hospital funding across the province. To ensure hospitals improve patient

services and increase accountability, we are working with hospitals and making them more accountable for the public tax dollars they spend.

We want to make sure that our patients are safe, and we called for an infection control audit in our hospitals to prevent infectious disease from being transmitted between patients.

We're respecting nurses. To ensure better working conditions for our nurses, we have invested \$14 million in patient lifts and adjustable beds.

We want to make sure that the health of our youngest citizens is the best that it can be, and so we are providing free vaccines for high-risk children under the age of five.

To improve patient care, we've invested \$50 million in Ontario hospitals to create more full-time nursing positions. We know that nurses are the heart and soul of our health care system, and we are making sure that our nurses are not injured and that our nurses in this province have full-time jobs.

We want to make sure that our hospitals don't face the pressure they have in the past. So to reduce the pressure faced by them, we're providing \$600 million over four years to support primary care and create 150 new family health teams to provide families with the services they need when they need them and to make sure that that service is in each of our own communities. We are driving the care into our communities where people live and work, where children need the care, whether it's night or day. We need to make sure that that care is in each of our communities. Those are the very commitments that we made in advance of being here.

To make sure that Ontarians who are at risk of getting a stroke get care, we've opened four more stroke care centres and six more secondary clinics. To ensure our hospitals are adequately staffed, we created 800 new full-time nursing positions in small and medium-sized hospitals in Ontario. To ensure that all Ontarians get the same level of care, we banned "pay your way to the front of the line" health care. To make sure that we were prepared to deal with public and medical emergencies, we've created Canada's first ever emergency medical assistance team. To protect the privacy of Ontario patients, we've passed the Personal Health Information Protection Act.

Importantly, to ensure our public health system is ready for the next outbreak, we have appointed Dr Sheela Basrur, the chief medical officer of health, and have introduced legislation to make her the first independent chief medical officer of health.

1600

To ensure that Ontarians have the best health care available, we've negotiated an additional \$824 million for health care from the federal government for 2004-05.

We are very proud of the commitments we have made and met on health care, and the list goes on and on.

I want to turn very briefly to another important area—there is more and it is important—and that is getting our fiscal house in order. As we know, without a sound fiscal house in order we would not be able to meet any of our

commitments. It is very unfortunate that we inherited such an unsound fiscal house from the previous government. But I can tell you, we make no excuses. We have taken the cards that we have been dealt and we are turning this ship around. We are building a better province for the people of Ontario, a better place to live and raise our children, a better place to breathe the air, a better place to go to school and a better place to seek health care in this province.

Let's talk about what we've done in terms of finances. We've given more flexibility to municipalities to set their property tax rates—important things for the independence of our municipalities. We've cancelled the 2005 property assessment to bring some stability to the property tax system.

We've grown the economy by introducing the apprenticeship training tax credit and a fiscally responsible plan to eliminate the capital tax. We've introduced legislation to give the Provincial Auditor powers to do value-for-money audits of schools, hospitals and other broader public sector partners. Those are important things.

Most important of all, we have done something that should have been done in this province a long time ago. We have introduced the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, setting new standards in government transparency, ensuring that the Provincial Auditor does have to report on the province's finances before an election instead of after, so that hidden deficits like those we inherited on the eve of an election will be a thing of the past.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Simcoe North.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to rise today to speak to the opposition day motion. It reads, That the Legislative Assembly call upon the government,

To fulfill the promises made by Liberal Party Leader Dalton McGuinty during the 2003 election, according to the original cost estimates as provided by the Liberal Party of Ontario.

I don't know what those cost estimates really were, because we've heard such a wide variety of promises—broken promises and election platform promises—that it's all kind of lost now to the citizens of Ontario.

I'd like to say that I'm glad this came forward. It's interesting that we brought this opposition day motion forward on this particular day, because we know that today the taxpayers federation is in court over Mr McGuinty's signature that was put on a line during the election period last fall. We all remember that. It was the photo op, and a bunch of potential candidates surrounding the future Premier as he signed his name and said, "I will not raise your taxes. I will have a referendum if in fact I raise your taxes." Of course that's all gone now. He admits now that it was a ploy.

It's kind of a sad situation, especially from the guy who brought forward a Minister of Democratic Renewal, the pit bull man over there who's now responsible for democratic renewal, that the very person who says we need democratic renewal pulled off a stunt like that,

promised the citizens of Ontario whatever they wanted to hear, found enough votes to get elected, and now we're stuck with the guy until 2007. I do hope he sticks to that date of 2007, because I don't think the citizens can handle it much longer.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): Yes, 2005 would be better.

Mr Dunlop: Yes, 2005 would be great, but I don't think he'd call an election right now. I think the people in Hamilton know full well what would happen. They've already indicated that in one of the by-elections.

I wanted to talk to you for a second about public safety. Today is Police Association of Ontario's lobby day, their reception day that they have here at Queen's Park. I met the guys, a group of four, early this morning. We talked about all the different issues. The one thing that came up in my conversation was the promise of 1,000 new police officers. That was part of the election platform. It was part of our platform, as well.

I wanted to talk a little bit about the cost of it because we know the Premier went out to the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police conference. They always do these types of things at these little media events, where they can get a bit of attention from whatever political stakeholder group they're dealing with. That day they said, "We're going to commit to our plan of 1,000." First of all, it's 13 months late. I've been asking the question to the Minister of Public Safety and he's said—he's on record—that all the police officers will be in place in this term of the government. I'm assuming, and I want to put it on the record here today—there are enough people here, as well as Hansard—when someone tells me 1,000 new police officers, that means, in my opinion, 1,000 new bodies working in Ontario. That doesn't mean you're taking somebody out of an office space or out of the courtroom or out of any other facility and saying that FTE becomes a police officer. I'm talking about 1,000 additional police officers in the province of Ontario.

If you calculate the salary of a police officer today and you look at their benefits and some of the capital costs that are associated with being a police officer, it costs approximately \$100,000 a year to put a police officer on the street. Let's assume the minister's going to fulfill his commitment and he's going to phase it in, because surely he won't find the money in the fourth year to put 1,000 new police officers in. Let's say, for example, that he puts in 333 police officers next year for the fiscal year 2004-05. At \$100,000 times 333, that's \$33 million, and over three years that would be \$99.9 million for those officers. The second year he adds another 333 officers for the year 2005-06—there would be two years left at that point in the mandate—that's \$66 million. For year three, the last year of the mandate, 2006-07, because we know there will be an election, but to have all those police officers in place for that fiscal year, another \$33 million for a one-year period. So we're talking about \$199 million total. That's what it will cost somebody in the province of Ontario to put 1,000 new police officers in if you begin to phase them in this year. I would have

thought we would have started phasing them in last year, in the first 13 months of the mandate.

What is Mr McGuinty going to contribute? Thirty million dollars out of \$199 million. That leaves a shortfall of \$169 million, \$170 million. That doesn't quite add up, because he promised 1,000 new police officers. Even at 50% funding with the municipalities, he's still \$70 million short. That's the reason I think we have to look at resolutions like we have here today, because the resolution calls for the costing of election promises. We know that in policing alone, if you started to phase in the police officers that Mr McGuinty promised tomorrow, he's \$170 million short in his estimates.

He did have a fancy photo op out at the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police about three weeks ago. But I can tell you, there wasn't a lot of excitement in the round of applause he got from the chiefs of police. I don't think they were too excited about the announcement.

Another great opportunity today with the Police Association of Ontario being here, he makes the announcement to remove option 4. Fine. We know that the Ontario Provincial Police doesn't have option 4 anyhow, but the remaining police services of the province do use option 4 and they generate revenues from it. Now we're getting a directive—it's not a regulatory change, it's not a piece of legislation. It's some kind of directive. I guess that was it today. "Please do as I say and eliminate option 4."

1610

I brought up earlier today the city of Barrie, which is just south of my riding. It's in my colleague Mr Tascona's riding of Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford. It's going to cost the city of Barrie \$750 million. Again, here we are: a fancy announcement in front of a stakeholder group, but no one knows where the \$750,000 is going to come from for the city of Barrie. What will happen? The city of Barrie will have to absorb that. Why will they have to absorb that? Because part of the directive is not to provide any funding. So the bottom line is that they used that to—

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): You said \$750 million.

Mr Dunlop: It's \$750,000. I'm sorry; I correct myself. It's \$750,000 that the city of Barrie will have to replace, and that will be made up by the taxpayers.

Now we know what's happening. We know about the photo radar. Mr Takhar, of course, hasn't answered the question yet. This will be the promise; I'm predicting this: that the deal's done and it's just a matter of when it's going to be rolled out. I'm assuming the Premier and the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services have used the municipalities of Ontario as a kind of a pawn in this game. He's asked them to give him feedback on photo radar, something we abolished and still believe is a tax grab. What has happened is that slowly they're going to allow the municipalities to install photo radar. We already know there's a private company in the United States working with the minister's office, drafting press releases, etc. They're going to be allowing photo radar to come back. The municipalities will be getting the revenues from it to pay for the additional police officers. It's a tax grab to pay for additional police officers.

Now they'll have to make up, as well, option 4. That's what is disappointing. It's a fancy announcement, but there's no money behind it whatsoever. The announcement today was a directive. What is a directive? I'm assuming that the municipalities or the police services across the province are obligated and committed to doing away with option 4. But it doesn't say that. He says in a press release, "I'm asking the municipalities—the police services—to do away with option 4, but I'm not going to give them one penny to go along with it."

I've spent some of my time talking about community safety, and that the upcoming photo radar—which the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services was completely opposed to when the NDP was in power, but today, now that he's the minister and working with the Premier, he seems to be siding with the Minister of Transportation and moving towards a photo radar tax grab here in the province.

With that, I've had an opportunity to say a few words. I know my colleague John Yakabuski will be speaking later, as well as Elizabeth Witmer and Jim Wilson. I know they'll bring a lot of really good insight into broken promises, spending that no one can understand, and how they come up with some of the numbers they come up with on the opposite side of the House. Even as recently as the economic statement here a week ago, the Minister of Finance said everything was so rosy, and yet we know consumer spending is down because this government is driving our province into a recession very slowly.

Mr Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity this afternoon. It looks like you want to get up. Maybe before I sit down I'll put one more plug in, because we will be going back to Mr Takhar's school safety bill. It includes a form of photo radar. I want to say one more time that I hope we can look at regulations and amendments to that bill that will provide for the government of Ontario to pay for the sales tax on any safety seats or equipment that are required under the legislation for children they're identifying.

I know that the Speaker who is in the chair now, the member from Waterloo-Wellington, has put a private member's bill through. I sure hope they will listen to that again. Like the double-hatter issue, he's adamant about this bill and is looking forward to some time of good debate. I hope that when that comes up, they'll look at community safety and at how they're affecting young families and the cost to young families, and actually give them back their sales tax.

Mr Prue: Before I start, I think we all need to be reminded what the debate is about this afternoon because people are talking, I think, around the purposes. So let's just clarify what the motion says. It says, "That the Legislative Assembly call upon the government,

"To fulfill the promises made by Liberal Party leader Dalton McGuinty during the 2003 election, according to the original cost estimates as provided by the Liberal Party of Ontario."

At first blush, this would appear to be a no-brainer. Of course people who make promises should, accordingly, be willing to keep those promises. That goes to say in

business, that goes to say in government, that goes to say in personal lives and in the interaction of person to person: If you promise to do something, you should be bound by that promise. Today, we know from the newspapers that there is a court case, involving a breach of promise or an alleged breach of promise, by one particular group against this government.

You know, I think we need to look at what promises are. Are politicians immune from what we expect from ordinary citizens? If a business person makes a promise to sell you goods or products and they do not live up to what they have promised, we say that this is fraudulent or we say that it is dishonest. I'm not suggesting for a minute—I'm not getting into the government, but that's what we say about business people. And we have remedy for that.

Indeed, this government today did a good thing. This government today put on the Web site a complaint form so that if people think they were scammed, if people think they've been ripped off, if people think the obligations that a business is supposed to have made have not been kept, they can report that to the government and they can ask for an investigation. We expect that from our business community and we expect that in our personal lives, but somehow, I think we expect less of politicians, and we ought not to do so.

The history of the world is filled with great people who have said very smart things. I'd just like to make a few quotes in three areas, some very good quotes. You will recognize some of them. One of them is surrounding promises. The second group is quotes about what integrity means, and the third one involves the importance of honesty.

Dealing first with promises, I always like to go back to the Bard; no one quite says it in the English language as well as William Shakespeare. I'm quoting from Macbeth here, when he says, and it's beautiful poetry too:

And be these juggling fiends no more believed,
That palter with us in a double sense;
That keep the word of promise to our ear,
And break it to our hope.

That's from Macbeth, Act V, scene viii.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): It's happened for a long time.

Mr Prue: No, it's happened for a long time, but this is 400 years ago in the English language, what the great Bard had to say about honesty and the importance of honesty and how people feel betrayed when promises made do not happen.

In the Arab tradition—and I apologize for my Arabic; maybe I should just give the translation. There's an Arab proverb I found which is kind of interesting too: "Promising and not fulfilling causes needless enmity." There's a good one. If you make a promise, whether you be a business person or an individual, whether you're talking to your son or daughter, whether you're talking to your parents when you're a teenager and promise to be home by 11 o'clock at night, that is your word. That is your bond. That is what you stand for, and you ought to

be able to live up to that. As the Arab proverb says, if you do not fulfill it, it causes needless enmity.

The second group I'd like to talk about is the issue of integrity, and there are some really good ones in here too. I really love some of these. The most famous one, again going back to the Bard—what did the Bard have to say about integrity? I think this is a quote that everybody in this room will have heard a thousand times, but it bears repeating again. It comes from Shakespeare, Hamlet, Act III, scene i. It's Polonius speaking:

This above all: to thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.

1620

So if you are to have integrity, then you have to be true to yourself. You have to say what you believe yourself and what you can carry out yourself, and you have to be willing to carry that out. That was Polonius's advice to his son, and it stands the test of time.

Interjection.

Mr Prue: And to the disposition of the NDP. You've got that right, sir.

Last but not least is honesty, because I think we in government, we in politics, no matter what party we belong to, no matter what creed or what we try to say, have to be honest in all of our dealings. It is very difficult to stand up on a platform and promise to do something and then not deliver. I have been through many elections, as I know most of the members of this House have been, be it to come to this House or municipal politics or some even in federal politics. You go through the election, you stand on your platform, you make promises, and you should be willing and must be willing to abide by what you say. If your word cannot be good, then we put disrepute not only upon ourselves, but on the very institutions that we strive to serve.

Just a couple of good quotes about honesty, because there's a whole whack of stuff here, just to remind the members about what some great learned people had to say about this.

I can at least do the French one, I hope. Denis Diderot from *Le Neveu de Rameau*: «... il y a peu de métiers honnêtement exercés, ou peu d'honnêtes gens dans leurs métiers.»

For those who didn't have their earphones in, "Either there are too few professions conducted honestly, or there are too few honest people in their professions."

I would like to think that the latter is not the case in this particular House. I would like to think that the people in this House, in their profession as politicians, conduct themselves honestly, and that there are more than too few of us. We should all strive to be that way.

Sophocles went on—I won't try my Greek. The translation: "Honesty can only be proved in time." A very good and noble statement, because when one makes a promise, only time will tell whether or not it can be carried out. What we're debating here today is, with those promises, was that honesty portrayed, and is it continuing to be portrayed in this Legislature?

Other great people, a Latin proverb: "Non omne quod licet honestum est," or, "Not everything that is permitted is honest." That goes a long way to say you are permitted to say things, I suppose, that are not honest when you are out on the hustings. That is, I guess, a truism that we would like not to have happen in this House.

Last but not least, the motto of the London Stock Exchange. I think this nails it right to the wall. The motto of the London Stock Exchange in Latin: "Verbum meum pactum"—"My word is my bond." If a politician were to stand up and say, "Verbum meum pactum," or, "My word is my bond," I would respect that politician immensely, and I would respect him or her even more if they kept it. I think that's what we need to talk about in part today.

A couple of other ones on honesty from English sources. Daniel Defoe: "Ay, sir; to be honest, as this world goes, is to be one man picked out of ten thousand." Excuse me. That's not Daniel Defoe; that's Shakespeare's Hamlet.

Cervantes, in Don Quixote, said, "Honesty is the best policy." I think we have all heard that one too.

Again back to Shakespeare, All's Well That Ends Well: "No legacy is so rich as honesty."

Enough of the quotations. I mean, the English language is filled with learned sayings, literature, people of great character telling us what we need to do as individuals. Nowhere do we need to do that more than in this Legislature. Nowhere do we need to do that more than when we are representing the millions and millions of people in this province. They expect that our word is our bond, they expect that we will act with integrity, they expect that we will be honest, and they expect that if we make promises when we are out there, we will do our utmost to live up to those promises.

The election was a difficult one. It was a difficult one for members of all political parties who sought office. You know, there were four major recognized parties in the last election: the Liberals, the Conservatives, the New Democrats and the Greens. They fielded candidates in literally all of the ridings. They ran on a platform, which they asked the voters to approve. And the majority of seats went to the Liberal Party. The majority of votes did not go there, but the majority of seats went there. I accept the system as the system is at this point, until, perhaps, it is changed, starting this week. We will wait and see whether that promise, in fact, comes to light.

But it was a difficult election, and a lot of promises were made. In fact, we have regularly heard in debate and inside this House that the Liberal Party, the one that was able to succeed in winning 72 seats during the last election, made 231 distinct promises. There is some suggestion that that number might be higher, and people are finding other promises from time to time that did not make it. But has this particular party kept the promises that they made to the people of Ontario? Have they shown honesty? Have they shown integrity in terms of what they promised to do and in fact what they are starting or are in the process of delivering?

I would suggest that that has not always been the case. I'm not saying it has never been the case. I'm not going to say that you haven't done some of the things that you said you were going to do. But there have been major, major failures and backtracking in terms of what you promised to do, how you've backtracked and how you have, I think, let down those who counted on you to change the way government is practised and policies are practised in the province of Ontario. Your platform said it all: "Choose change." People chose a different reality than the ones they had under the previous Conservative government. They chose, I think, a kinder, gentler approach to politics. But they also expected that you would do your utmost to keep the promises that you made, and some of them were huge on the public eye. Some of them were huge to the people of Ontario who were looking most seriously for major changes.

I want to suggest to you that there were 10 really bad things that you have not kept up with. And I want to suggest there were 10 broken promises that, to me, rank right up there, and are why this particular motion is being brought forward by the official opposition.

In my mind, the 10 are:

(10) You promised to lower Highway 407 tolls.

(9) You promised to protect the Oak Ridges moraine and to halt development, and then you okayed 5,700 new homes.

(8) You promised to help rural Ontario, and then you cut the agricultural budget by 12%.

(7) You claimed a big surprise in terms of the deficit, when Gerry Phillips, who was at that point the finance critic for the Liberals, warned of up to a 5% shortfall, as did Mr Kwinter, who is now in the cabinet, say the same thing. And you feigned surprise and shock about this very deficit after the election. I told Mr Phillips the selfsame thing, if you want to go get the tape on TVO, when Mr Phillips and Janet Ecker, who was then the finance minister, and I were called to a debate in the throes of the election and asked to discuss whether, in fact, the government of Ontario was running a deficit. A day before, there had been a report put out by a right-wing think-tank, and there had been many aspersions cast in terms of the \$5 billion. Mr Phillips at first said point blank that there was a \$5-billion deficit, to which point Madam Ecker came back and said, "Of course there isn't. There's no deficit. There's no such thing." Then they asked me to comment, and I said, "I'm positive there's a \$5-billion deficit, or something approaching that deficit, but the reality is that as soon as the election is finished—and at this point I assume with the polls that the Liberals are going to win—the first thing that is going to happen is there is going to be feign and disguise and saying, 'I know nothing about it.'" Mr Phillips was visibly upset when I made that suggestion, and rightly so, because he knew exactly what was going to happen.

1630

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): No, he didn't.

Mr Prue: No, he knew exactly what was going to happen. You were going to win the election because you

were miles ahead in the polls, and then you were suddenly going to find out you had a \$5-billion deficit, which he already had forecast and which you already knew about.

Interjection.

Mr Prue: That's that one. That's the shock and surprise.

The next thing you promised to do was to stop private hospitals.

Mr Speaker, if he's going to heckle me, he should at least be in his seat. If he doesn't know the rules of the House, he should.

The Acting Speaker: The member has clearly indicated that your heckling is bothering him, member for Mississauga West, and I ask you to refrain from it. I recognize the member for Beaches-East York.

Mr Prue: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

(6) You promised to stop private hospitals, but then proceeded in Brampton and Ottawa to do the self-same thing with private hospitals.

(5) You promised—this one comes up in the Legislature literally once a week by my colleague from Nickel Belt—IBI treatment for all autistic children. You promised help before the election and then you denied the help after the election. What's even worse, you are taking families who can ill afford it to court.

(4) You promised 20% lower auto insurance rates, promised the rates would go down, but I put it to you that the rates are still going up. I'm going to deal with all of these in more detail, but you promised.

I want to anecdotally tell you that I got my insurance last week. I opened it up in eager anticipation of a rate reduction. I hadn't had a rate reduction in years. I have no tickets for the last seven years. I have no claims for the last seven years. I have a seven-star rating. I was with Certas—I guess I still am legally with Certas auto insurance. I opened it up, and to my surprise and horror I got a 5% increase. So of course I phoned. I thought this must be some huge mistake. I waited on hold for a long time. I got a very personable young man who told me that in fact that was not the case, that Certas auto insurance has been granted by this government anywhere up to a 31% increase, and that I was lucky mine was just under 5% because I have a seven-star rating.

Of course I have started to shop around and I hope to find another insurance company. I am a lucky person with a seven-star rating in auto, and I'm hoping to find one, but there is a major insurance carrier that is not delivering on what this government said they were going to do. This is what has happened to me, and I think there are many people out there exactly like me who think this has not been a promise kept.

(3) You promised the hydro rate cap and public power. You promised affordable public power, and then you have delivered expensive power. I'm not blaming the government totally. You cannot sell something for less than what it costs to make. Any businessperson will tell you that, but you should not have made the promise in

the first place. You should not have made a promise you knew you could not keep.

(2) You promised there would be no health care delistings. You promised more health care, and then you have cut chiropractic, physiotherapy and eye examinations.

(1) I think the biggest promise break of all was the unfair regressive health tax. You promised no new taxes and then you whacked ordinary Ontarians with a health tax they can ill afford. You leave the very rich paying nothing more than a family making \$50,000 a year.

Mr Crozier: What about the fair-share health tax?

Mr Prue: No, you can think it's a fair share, but I think that has been a betrayal of the people of this province.

Let's go back through these because I've got 14 minutes left and I want to talk about some of these because they're pretty good.

Promise 10: Ontario Liberals to stop the 407 rip-off.

Dalton McGuinty said a whole bunch of things:

“Not only did the Harris-Eves government fail to protect consumers. It misled them,” McGuinty said.

“The Tories promised that the lease with the 407 consortium limits toll increases to 2% plus inflation, so we're going to roll the tolls back to the levels they should be had the Tories kept their word. Future fee hikes will be capped at the same rate: 2%, plus inflation.”

Reality check: That has not happened. It has not happened. Tolls continue to rise and the people who use that particular highway feel that they have been betrayed.

Promise number 9—going back on that—the Oak Ridges moraine; some of the things that were said. Again, I quote Mr McGuinty:

“We're committed to providing genuine protection to the Oak Ridges moraine,” he told reporters Thursday evening after delivering a speech to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce.

“I'm delivering a message through you tonight to tell those people involved that we intend to stand up for the protection of that environmentally sensitive space.”

“McGuinty said that a Liberal government will not allow the planned construction of 6,600 housing units on the moraine, even though development has already begun.”

It didn't take very long. We heard in estimates only last week or two weeks ago—I can't remember now; this place is a blur—through the very capable cross-examination by the member from Erie-Lincoln of the Minister of Municipal Affairs that the McGuinty government, before it was even sworn into office, in that period between election day and the swearing in some couple of weeks later, sent out the new chief of staff of the Premier to negotiate a deal. And what deal was negotiated? Not the protection of the housing. Sure, a few housing units were taken out there and shoved over to Pickering. But the housing continues to go there. Whether there was a legal problem or not, I would think that is not sufficient. If one is going to make that kind of promise to halt housing on the Oak Ridges moraine, then one had better

deliver it, because a lot of people felt betrayed about that. One in particular is Mr De Baeremaeker—you remember him; I think he ran for you, at least on one occasion: “Dalton McGuinty said he would fix the mess, and unfortunately they’re turning around and running away from the developers with their tails tucked between their legs.”

Municipal Affairs Minister John Gerretsen explained his party’s election promise in kind of an interesting way: “Perhaps we were too naive without knowing the full implications of the deal at the time that promise was made.”

Again, back to Glenn De Baeremaeker, who is with the Save the Rouge Valley System:

“They’re not in office eight weeks and they’ve totally caved to the developers. Their policies and Mike Harris’s policies—you can’t tell them apart.”

So we have a whole bunch of environmentalists who weren’t very pleased with that.

The help for rural Ontario—I have already talked; I don’t know whether I can add much more to that. You promised to help rural Ontario and then you slashed the agricultural budget by 12% in the first budget.

I don’t want to spend any more time on the surprise deficit. You all know the history of that, even though it continues to be denied.

Private-public hospitals, though, are kind of interesting. What did McGuinty say during the election? I take this from the National Post, May 23, 2003:

“Canada’s first two experiments in privately built and owned hospitals would be quickly dismantled if the Liberals took power in Ontario,” Dalton McGuinty, the party’s leader, vowed yesterday.

“His comments came as proponents of one of the projects—a \$95-million mental health centre in Ottawa—blitzed media outlets to promote the idea of private-public partnerships, or P3s, in health care.

“We would move as quickly as we could to bring any P3s into the public system,” he said.”

1640

There are legal documents, and I’m sure that there is an excuse for not doing that, because we have heard the excuse in this Legislature. But the reality is that the promise was made, and if one has integrity and honesty, one should not have made a promise that could not be kept in the first place.

People were either elated at what the Liberals have done or they were disappointed. Let’s go with the disappointed people first. I would like to quote Natalie Mehra from the Ontario Health Coalition: “‘The corporations that get these contracts make profits of 25% a year,’ says Natalie Mehra. ‘Those profits translate into worse hospital care—bed reductions of 25%, 14% fewer nurses and 38% fewer support staff.’”

There were people who liked it. I would like to quote another member of the House, the member from Nepean-Carleton, because he disagreed with that statement. The member from Nepean-Carleton, MPP John Baird, had the following to say: “I’m afraid we’re looking at a modified

P3 here”—oh, no, excuse me. That’s what Michael Hurley said. Sorry, I take that back.

The actual quote from John Baird is: “‘Despite the Orwellian doublespeak ... on first glance it looks pretty identical to the deal that Ernie Eves announced ... so from that standpoint, we’re thrilled,’ said Conservative MPP John Baird.”

You have a whole group of people out there who are fighting for public medicare, who believed the promise you made that you would do something with the P3 hospitals. Maybe you couldn’t do it. I’m not saying that all the lawyers in town couldn’t convince you that you were wrong. What I am saying is that when you make that promise, you should deliver, because you have people now who counted on what you said, who believed in your integrity and honesty, who are now starting to disbelieve that. You are putting politicians and this Legislature into some disrepute.

The help for autistic children: This one is sorely grievous. I quote Mr McGuinty before the election, on September 17, 2003: “I also believe that the lack of government-funded IBI treatment for autistic children over six is unfair and discriminatory. The Ontario Liberals support extending autism treatment beyond the age of six.” What has happened? What has happened to that lofty promise? We have heard that it might cost too much money. We have heard that the government wants to take the parents of children who have autism—who, after all, only want the best for their children—to court. The government refuses to say how much money they are spending on lawyers—their own government lawyers or outside lawyers—to fight a growing list of thousands of parents across this province who believed that promise. I believe that probably most of them ended up supporting Mr McGuinty for the promise he made on autism, and now, today, we see that they have to beg, they have to borrow.

Last night I watched a CBC documentary on the news. We saw people mortgaging their houses, people doing everything that is possible in order to bring this government, the party that made the promise, to heel. They are going to court, taking extraordinary measures, because they believe that what was promised is not being delivered and, in fact, worse than that: what is being promised is being denied to them and they’re being forced to go through the courts to get what anyone would want for their child, and that is an opportunity in life.

In March, the Ontario Human Rights Commission referred to a record 121 autism-related complaints against the McGuinty government to the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal. François Larsen, spokesperson for the commission said, “Normally, for any other disease or problem, if you need a service it’s provided until it’s not necessary to do so. In this instance ... the criterion has nothing to do with the necessity or not of treatment; it’s just randomly age. What we’re saying is: That’s wrong, you should provide the service if it’s required.”

To quote one of the lawyers fighting for a family, Mary Eberts, “The government’s position is, if anything,

more heated up than it was under the Ernie Eves' government."

So the reality is that thousands of people with autistic children, thousands of people who counted upon the words of the opposition leader, now the Premier, during that heated campaign in September and October of last year, find that that is not and was not the case. They feel that the integrity and the honesty of the statement is at question. It again puts into disrepute what is done in this House and when we as politicians stand up and make those promises.

Auto insurance: I've talked about my own auto insurance, and I don't expect anything different. The auto insurance premiums have continued to go up. What has gone down for many Ontarians is what the auto insurance pays when they have an accident or need to make a claim. One of the most grievous examples I saw was that there used to be a—if somebody stole your car, you used to be able to make the claim for the car. Now, under this new scheme, which is supposed to save people money but which doesn't, if somebody steals your car, there is a \$500 deductible, as if you are somehow to blame for it in terms of the auto insurance. So I think people are starting to see that there are a lot of problems here with what they believed was going to happen with auto insurance; it quite clearly is not.

In terms of hydro and what was being said, I quote Dalton McGuinty again, September 7, 2003: "We will keep the price cap in place until 2006. We do not believe that you should pay the price for the government's mistakes." It didn't take very long to increase the cost from 4.7 to 5.5 cents an hour. You know, who does that hurt? Does that hurt me? No, I make enough money. I'm sure all the members of this Legislature make enough money to pay the extra \$10 or \$20 or \$30 or \$40 that it costs for hydro in our homes. Can the industry pay it? Some of them, yes; some of them, no. Some of them will surely go bankrupt because the cost of electricity is a major component. Those that can do it will pass on the price to consumers, and we see a whole spiralling of inflation. But who does it really hurt? It really hurts the poor. As Mary Todorow from the Low-Income Energy Network had to say, "For many low-waged workers and people on social assistance and other income security programs, it's going to mean choosing between heating, eating and paying the rent." That is the very sad reality.

Health service delistings: We've had a whole talk about that today.

I've got 48 seconds, so I'm going to skip to the last one, which was the health tax. You know, McGuinty, before: "Tory leadership candidates Ernie Eves and Chris Stockwell may want to raise taxes by charging families an additional \$1,000 a year for health care. I do not," McGuinty said. "Families are already paying for health care with their taxes. Pay more for health care, pay twice for health care, but get less health care—that's the Tory plan. It's certainly not the Liberal plan."

We have seen what has happened today. Everybody is being forced to pay more, particularly people with low

income, at disproportionate amounts, and they're getting less. No chiropractic services, they're getting no physiotherapy services, and they are having to pay for optometrists. This is a health tax that hurts ordinary Canadians.

I support this motion today, and I think it causes pause for all—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much. Further debate?

Mr Crozier: I'm pleased to join in this debate today because it's kind of an interesting one. I think each of us has to be careful what we say, both inside this place and outside. Who of us in here at some time or another hasn't had our words come back to haunt us? Who of us in here at some time or another hasn't had to change their position on an issue over time?

You know, I found one thing. I sat in opposition for 10 of the 11 years that I've been here, and it's a lot more difficult to defend than it is to criticize. Of course, being the government of the day, there are going to be criticisms, because if you aren't doing anything, then there's really nothing to criticize, in some cases. An interesting thing, too, is the obvious, that it's only the party that wins the election and gains the responsibility of government that has to answer for its commitments. The official opposition had all kinds of commitments. Some have suggested they were at a cost of \$30 billion. They don't have to defend those commitments because they're not the government. The third party made commitments. They don't have to defend them. They're not the government. So I think each of us has to be careful what we say about our commitments and whether someone is either keeping them or not keeping them.

1650

So rather than go that route, I guess that's perhaps the end of the philosophical part. I loved the member from Beaches-East York's quotes. They were great and to the point. Some of them made you think a little bit about yourself—ourselves—in this place.

One year has gone, three years to go. Who's to say, unless you can identify something specific that the government's actually done opposite to what it planned, is a promise broken? We've got a long way to go and, frankly, it's going to be the voters who are the judge. In fact, it was raised today how there's a court case going on that's coincidental to this motion that's come forward.

I'll just briefly refer to the editorial in the National Post today, "Let Voters be the Judges":

"That's precisely what makes the Canadian Taxpayers Federation's current lawsuit against the Ontario government so dangerous....

"While it is the law of the province, and no law should be violated with impunity, breaking it is not quite on a legal or ethical par with violating provincial or federal laws against fraud, influence peddling or embezzlement," and so forth.

"Beyond the merits of this particular case is the dangerous precedent that would be set by encouraging judges to overturn election results based on lawsuits

brought forward by interest groups or disenchanted segments of the electorate....

“Interestingly,” the editorial in the Post today goes on to say, “it is the Conservatives—at least in Canada—who seem most inclined to bring forward such suits.”

Enough said. I think probably that says a lot to what really will come of this so-called court case that’s going on today.

I have here—and I don’t have that much time—a list of some 102 positive initiatives our government has accomplished in its first year in office. Some of them may not have been promises at all. Some are promises we made, some are commitments we made, some are the result of events that have occurred in the last year.

I think part of the context in which we should look at honesty in this place is if you have the honesty to say what is the reality of the day. In other words, maybe I can’t do what it is I wanted to do on behalf of the citizens of Ontario. Maybe we can’t do that, and for whatever reason. I think enough has been said in this place about those things that we understood before the election and those that we know are facts since, so I’m not going to go there. But I think part of being honest is to be able to recognize what it is you wanted to do, what you now can’t do, and what it is you have to do on behalf of the citizens of Ontario.

I’m going to go through some of those things that I think are positive that we’ve done in this past year and say to the electorate that we do have three more years in which to convince the public in Ontario that we’ve done a good job with those tools we had at hand. I’m confident that, at the end of those three years, the next three years, we’ll be able to go to the electorate and put that case forward. And as we all know in this place, the electorate will decide. In almost 20 years that I’ve been in public office, both municipally and provincially, I’ve never known the electorate to be wrong, because that’s the way a democracy works.

So rather than criticizing what has gone on in the past and trying to find fault with somebody else, please bear with me while I just give some positive tone to what we’ve been able to accomplish in this first year. I’m going to dwell probably mainly on agriculture, because I represent a small urban/rural municipality.

In the area of agriculture, before we came to office we knew that there was some concern about food safety in Ontario, notwithstanding the fact that I think we have the safest food in Canada. Canada certainly has the safest food amongst any of the nations in the world. But to ensure food safety, we have hired more full-time meat inspectors. That’s what we said we would do, and we did it. To ensure the financial health of the agricultural industry, we hammered out what we think was a better deal on the agricultural policy framework with the federal government. To ensure that Ontario’s food remains safe, we asked a prominent judge to conduct an inquiry into problems in food safety—something we said we would do; something we’ve done. To help the farmers who are in crisis, and this is something that—former

governments can’t foresee crises that come up. SARS was one that the former government had to deal with. BSE was one that came upon us and which we’ve had to continue to deal with. So what did we do? We contributed, along with the federal government, \$74 million to provide stability to our farmers. Is it enough? Probably not, but at least we tried to address a crisis in the agricultural industry. To protect Ontario’s dairy farmers we said that we would bring in the Edible Oil Products Repeal Date Amendment Act, which we did.

Too often—and I guess it’s because I’m in government, and as I said at the outset, it’s much more difficult to defend than it is to criticize—we dwell on those things that we know are negative and are easier to explain. It’s easy to explain something that’s not logical or doesn’t have reason behind it. It’s easier to make the statement; more difficult to really explain what the circumstances are around it.

I think our government is protecting the viability of family farming in the province by exempting the land transfer tax on farmland, not something that every individual—in fact, most people in Ontario don’t know about it and couldn’t care less. But it is a positive thing that we’ve done to help our farmers.

We’ve enhanced the safety of foods produced and processed in Ontario. In doing that, we’re investing in research projects that are designed for that purpose. We’ve tried to help Ontario’s livestock industry, as I’ve said. We’ve tried to help the agri-food sector by becoming more competitive and investing \$2.5 million in a rural development centre at Ridgetown College. Our government is providing up to \$30 million to help the industry, in addition to the \$74 million I mentioned to help with BSE.

So there are some, if I counted them, 12 or 13 initiatives that we have taken in the last year in the area of agriculture.

Today, we’re dealing with numbers. Again, we hear about it in the criticism of our government that we made X number of promises. At the end of the day, I think what’s really going to be important is, did you do the very best you could under the circumstances?

1700

I’ll end with this: I think back to the election, and I don’t know who really knew at the time what the financial circumstances of this province would be, because there had been some crises we faced and it’s difficult to predict what the economy is going to be like one, two, three or four years down the road. I honestly think that by far the majority—I look around this place, and I can’t name one person from any party who went into that election about whom anybody could say, “They’re really being dishonest. They know for certain that something either is or is not the case.” But I can say that most of what I observed during the election was an attempt to identify what needed attention in this province, to articulate how we, as a government, might address it, and then, in the final analysis, do the best we could to address that.

Have things changed? Would we rather have had the opportunity to do it differently in some cases? Absolutely. But in the end, the real honesty will show when we've done the best we could under the circumstances we were faced with, in the best interests of the people of Ontario.

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I'm pleased to join the debate on the opposition day motion put forward by my colleague Mr Runciman "that the Legislative Assembly call upon the government to fulfill the promises made by Liberal Party leader Dalton McGuinty during the 2003 election, according to the original cost estimates as provided by the Liberal Party of Ontario."

I guess I'll begin by just reminding people that it was about one year ago—a little bit longer—that people in the province of Ontario had the opportunity to choose a new government, choose new representatives. At that time, they made a choice based on a very, very expensive package of election promises.

I know personally that when I took a look at some of the promises and some of the estimated costs, having been in different portfolios, whether the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Health or, particularly, the Ministry of Education, I knew the numbers for the estimated cost of the program were not realistic, particularly when I took a look at the estimate for class size.

I had asked Dr Rozanski to take a look at that very issue: What would it cost if we were going to cap class size? Of course, he had studied the issue. He had gone to other jurisdictions and come back and said to us that the cost of lowering class size could not be justified. It was going to cost in excess of \$1 billion, and the outcomes were not necessarily going to improve until you got below a number something like 17. He also indicated that if we were really intent on helping those students who were struggling and needed extra help, a better investment would be in early literacy and numeracy programs.

I'm pleased to say that, based on his recommendations, we did deliver and invest in those early literacy and early numeracy programs. I was also pleased to see that, as a result of the programs our government put in place—this new emphasis on early literacy and early numeracy—in the most recent testing at the elementary school level, students in this province continue to do better and better. I believe that, for the first time, what we were able to do was determine how our students were doing, but we were also able to determine, then, how we could provide remediation. The only reason you test anyone is to ensure that once you recognize their strengths or weaknesses, you invest in remediation programs in order to help those who need additional help. You also then allow the teachers to understand what the needs of their students are, parents to understand what the needs of the students are and, hopefully, with the student working with the teacher and the parents, you help that student to achieve better success.

So I think the recommendations that Dr Rozanski made to us to invest in early literacy, early numeracy,

invest more in remediation, students at risk—another program I'm particularly proud of was to help the students we knew were going to have trouble with the literacy test in grade 10. The at-risk program actually was based on recommendations we got from people who were in the educational sector. In fact, we had the director of education from the Kingston area participate, and I know that program is now moving forward. They're identifying students who are going to be at risk before they ever write the test. They're helping those who don't achieve the level of success needed after they write the test. We've also put in place an extra year of support in order that people who obviously do not achieve success writing tests can be evaluated in terms of a one-year program.

So I knew during the election campaign that this pledge to reduce class size to 20 was one they could not achieve, given the amount of money they had estimated it was going to cost. Our party was trying to get the real costing information. We set about doing this last October 17, when we made our first request for what it would actually cost, the real cost related to the election platform. We made this request:

"I seek all information regarding the costing and/or plans for implementation of the Liberal Party platform as they were presented to Premier-designate Dalton McGuinty and the incoming Liberal government of Ontario and his transition team and staff, as assembled by the Ontario public service, including but not limited to copies of correspondence, briefing notes, e-mails and memos or any communications between the two parties on this subject."

On November 7 of last year, a cost estimate of \$243 was returned to PC research services for access to that information. On November 20, that money was paid, the \$243. We agreed it was the only way to get the information as to the real costs of the program; we would pay \$243. Then we received documents from Cabinet Office that failed to indicate the estimated cost of even one single promise. So the information was not provided, despite the fact that we had been told that if we paid \$243, we could get that information. Subsequently, the next day PCRS called Cabinet Office to question the absence of the costing information, and PCRS was verbally informed that such a document did not exist.

Then on December 3 of last year—I guess we were determined not to give up—based on the information received from the first freedom of information request, our party made a second request for information to Cabinet Office, specifically requesting the cost to implement the Liberal election promises. Again, on December 16, the responsibility for the request made on December 3 was transferred to the Ministry of Finance. On December 23, just a few days before Christmas, the Ministry of Finance confirmed their receipt of this second FOI request. Finally, on January 21, the Ministry of Finance responded to this request, granting partial access to a limited number of records. A 60-page document entitled *Estimated Costs of Initiatives*, however, was denied to us in whole by the ministry.

1710

Then, on January 26, at a meeting of the standing committee on finance and economic affairs regarding pre-budget consultations, John Baird questioned the Ministry of Finance officials about the 60-page document, but the Deputy Minister of Finance responded by saying, "I'm not familiar with that document. I will look into it," and, I quote, "I don't believe that such a concise set of estimates exists."

On February 6, after this denial, after this refusal to provide the information even though we had paid our \$243 for the freedom-of-information request, PCRS launched a formal appeal. We had to go beyond this precinct in some respects. We had to go to the Information and Privacy Commissioner to gain access to this 60-page report that was being denied in full by the Ministry of Finance.

On February 10, we the official opposition moved a motion to have the costing information released to the members of the standing committee on finance and economic affairs. However, I am disappointed to say that the Liberal members of the committee voted down that resolution. On February 11, this appeal to the Information and Privacy Commissioner—we received a response. The IPC acknowledged receipt of our appeal and began a preliminary review to determine the substance of our appeal.

On February 26, the IPC confirmed the appeal brought forward at PCRS and the mediation process commenced. On April 5 of this year, the mediation process was completed with no resolution. The Ministry of Finance elected to forgo mediation and allowed the appeal to be transferred directly to adjudication. The Ministry of Finance maintained that the 60-page document—I guess now they are acknowledging that there is one—was exempt from freedom of information due to cabinet confidentiality and the potential impact on the economic interests of the province.

On May 27, the IPC officially launched the inquiry into this 60-page document, which people had refused to even acknowledge existed, and provided a copy of the initial arguments from the Ministry of Finance as to why the document should be withheld from FOI. On June 22, the response prepared by PCRS in response to the claims made by the Ministry of Finance was forwarded to the ministry for additional comment by the IPC. On June 29, there was a rebuttal from the Ministry of Finance received via the IPC.

On July 13, there were additional arguments in favour of releasing the 60-page document presented to the IPC, in contrast to the previous remarks made by the Ministry of Finance. On July 28, the Ministry of Finance once again responded to arguments made by PCRS. These arguments were forwarded by the IPC to PCRS on August 11. In this letter, the Ministry of Finance indicated its intention to now provide partial access. Again, we've now been at this for months and months and there is some acknowledgment that such a document does exist.

On August 4, the Ministry of Finance altered its initial decision made on January 21 regarding the 60-page document. The ministry has now decided that partial access to the 60-page document should be provided to PCRS. In accordance with this decision, the 60-page document was forwarded to PCRS with all but two columns blacked out. The remaining columns are titled "Initiative" and "Ministry." The document effectively lists all of the Liberal campaign promises and the ministry responsible for implementation, but not costing information.

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): What a cover-up.

Mrs Witmer: Unbelievable.

On August 5, PCRS informed the IPC that despite the revised decision from the Ministry of Finance, our office wished to continue with the appeal in order to gain access to the remainder of the 60-page document.

On August 11, PCRS received the July 28 representation from the Ministry of Finance via the IPC.

On August 27, PCRS indicated to the IPC that there was no additional information that our office wished to bring forward in this matter and requested that the matter be adjudicated at the earliest convenience.

On September 13, The IPC rendered its final decision in a 15-page summation. The verdict of the IPC—and I think it is significant that the IPC has now made a ruling or is making a ruling; remember, the IPC is the Information and Privacy Commissioner and that's pretty significant when you have to appeal to that person—is that the ministry must disclose the remaining portions of the 60-page document to PCRS by October 4. Basically, they needed to make sure that the numbers needed to be included in the release of the document.

On September 17, the first media reports of the decision of the IPC to force the government to disclose the 60-page document in full surfaced in the Toronto Star, the Kitchener-Waterloo Record, the Hamilton Spectator and the Canadian Press.

The next day, additional media coverage was noted in the Timmins Daily Press, the Sudbury Star, the Sault Star and the St Catharines Standard.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is unbelievable. I have never heard of such a process that an opposition party has needed to go through in order to get a 60-page costing document, that people refuse to even acknowledge there was such a document in the first place.

Let's take a look at some of the coverage. Here's a headline: The Toronto Star, October 5, says, "Liberals Kept Quiet on True Cost of Promises: Secret Report Puts the Tally at \$11B to \$18B but Sorbara Says \$5.9B would do it." It says that this is "two to three times what Dalton McGuinty promised last year." It goes on to say that this "detailed analysis made public" only "under orders from the privacy commissioner reveals fulfilling" these "231 campaign promises would be more expensive than previously thought."

Then the finance minister, who made no effort to release this information, nor has the rest of the government, says, "You know what? This report is not import-

ant. It's not very reliable, it's not very relevant and we've never used it for anything."

Folks, if it wasn't important and it wasn't relevant, why did the government spend almost a year trying to conceal and prevent its release, not just to the opposition but also to the people in Ontario? You take a look at this report, you take a look at the discrepancies between the estimates in the election platform prior to the election of this government and the true cost, and there is a huge and very significant difference.

This is what the media said: "McGuinty's Pledges Expensive: Secret Report Made Public."

Here we have the *Globe and Mail*. The headline of October 5 is, "Liberals Deceived Voters, Tory Says: Grit Promises will Cost \$18 Billion, not \$5.9 Billion."

1720

Here we have an instance where nobody wanted to tell the truth, and I guess that's why we have this motion in front of us today. There was a tremendous number of promises—231 promises—made by this government, and people elected this government based on those promises and the estimated cost of \$5.9 billion. Since that time, this government has demonstrated these promises are much more expensive to keep. In fact, they found it's much easier to break their promises, and we have seen a whole rash of broken promises since the election, probably in the neighbourhood of at least 38 promises and, unfortunately, the people of Ontario have suffered the consequences.

One of the biggest broken promises we have seen was the introduction of the health tax. Here is a huge tax that is taking money out of the pockets of hard-working people in this province. In the case of some individuals, it's \$900 per year. We know that consumer spending is down, and it's no wonder: so many broken promises, so much more money coming out of the pockets of taxpayers. People are paying more and getting less, particularly in health care. Not only do they have to pay this new health tax, but they're losing access to chiropractors, physiotherapy and eye exams as well.

The minister, regrettably, has indicated that he doesn't rule out further delisting of services when it comes to health care in Ontario, and he hasn't ruled out further tax increases. Basically, folks, for a government that campaigned against two-tier medicine and against privatization of health care, the delisting of those three services moves us in that direction: If you can afford it, you can go and get an eye test; if you can afford it, you can go to the chiropractor; if you can afford it, you can have physiotherapy. We've heard in this House about people who simply don't have the financial resources, who are going to be deprived of that opportunity. I'm very concerned about eye testing, because if you have an eye disease, it's not like a toothache and it's not like a backache; you don't usually know you have a problem.

So it's important, I believe, that we seriously question the decisions that have been made by this government.

Another broken promise they made was to balance the budget. Obviously that isn't happening. They promised

not to add to the debt: "We will make sure the debt goes in one direction, down. We will not add to the debt." The 2004 budget shows that over the next three years the Liberals will add \$12 billion to the debt, erasing the \$5-billion net reduction we achieved when we were in government and adding another \$7 billion.

They also broke the promise of capping hydro rates at 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour until 2006, which is what they promised. In fact, Premier McGuinty promised this in a scrum on November 18, 2002, and he spoke to this again on September 20 when he said, "The price freeze stays until 2006." Guess what? A month after taking office, they announced the cap would be removed in April 2004—another broken promise.

They promised to stop 6,600 homes on the Oak Ridges moraine, and we know that promise has been broken. Municipal Affairs Minister John Gerretsen was forced to announce that 5,700 houses will be built and pleaded that the Liberals were, I quote, "naive for making the promise."

I've spoken to the biggest break, when the Premier said on TV screens throughout the campaign, "I won't raise your taxes." We have seen tax increases in the 2004 budget of a record \$7 billion.

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): The largest ever.

Mrs Witmer: The largest ever in the history of this province: a \$1.6-billion personal income tax hike to pay for health care premiums; a \$3.9-billion electricity rate hike; increases in taxes on liquor, wine, beer and tobacco; a 50% increase in driver's licence fees; elimination of the Ontario home ownership savings program; elimination of critical tax credits such as the workplace accessibility tax incentives, the workplace child care tax incentive, the sales tax exemption on vehicles for disabled persons, and income tax incentives for electricity supply and conservation. In fact, people in Ontario are experiencing, on average, a 65% increase in user fees—unbelievable.

The other one where people are getting hit is they were promised that they would reduce auto insurance rates by 10% within 90 days. It has not happened.

Mr Wilson: For a total of 20%.

Mrs Witmer: That's right. My colleague reminds me that this was going to be 20% overall. Well, that's not happened either.

They also promised to make Ontario's chief medical officer an independent officer of the Legislature, and in the case of their current appointment, that has not happened either. They promised to provide autism treatment beyond age six, to divert 60% of municipal garbage to recycling by 2005. These are all broken promises.

They promised to stop school closings. They promised to fund medically necessary health care services. I've gone through that one—eye exams, chiropractic, physio. They're gone. They promised to provide adequate multi-year funding for hospitals. Well, we all know the war that was started by the current Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, who, despite the fact that a year ago he went to the OHA and said, "Let's work together in co-operation," then introduced Bill 8 and since then has

created extreme anxiety in the hospital sector: people afraid of job cuts. In fact, we've been told that without adequate multi-year funding for hospitals we're going to see programs closed, services reduced. We're going to see nurses and other staff members laid off.

So I hope today that everybody in this House supports our opposition day motion, because it is important that this government be held accountable. They made promises. They were elected on these promises, and I ask them today to be accountable to the people in Ontario and stand up and fulfill the commitment.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): As always, I am glad to have the honour to stand and speak on behalf of my constituents of London-Fanshawe and also basically on behalf of all the people of the great city of London, Ontario.

I was listening carefully to the speaker before me, the honourable member from Kitchener-Waterloo. She was talking about breaking promises. I guess I'm privileged to get the chance to speak against that motion brought by the opposition for opposition day number three in terms of fulfilling the promises our government and our party made before the election in 2003.

I am involved in politics because I believe I can make a difference for the people of London-Fanshawe, for the people who gave me the chance to be with them for a long, long time to work and start business, socialize with, live in the area, talk to them on a daily basis. That's why I was convinced to run for election, especially after the past government destroyed health care, destroyed education, destroyed the social structure. All these elements gave me a great reason to run for election. I found in the platform of the Liberal Party and the leader of the party, our Premier right now, Dalton McGuinty, a person to restore the education and the health care and the social infrastructure.

1730

On October 2, 2003, the people decided and made a choice, and they chose change. We were elected to be the government of Ontario. Since that time, our government has been on the right track to rebuild this province, to restore education, to work with the teachers, to build schools, and to respect and honour the teachers who work hard to educate our kids, to ensure we have a bright, strong and great future.

The speaker before me, the member for Kitchener-Waterloo, was the Minister of Education. I remember what she did when she was the Minister of Education. She created chaos in the education system. The people lost their trust in the public system. The teachers were fighting the government, the government was fighting the teachers, and the parents and students got lost.

Now the honourable member from Kitchener-Waterloo stands up and speaks about good education. She's trying to defend the education system. As a matter of fact, in her time when she was the minister, she worked hard to destroy public education and push forward private education. When she was the Minister of Health, she didn't do a better job.

I was listening to her last week talking about health in this province. She was talking about how to enhance our health care in this province. When she was the minister, many nurses were laid off, many hospitals were closed and many doctors left the province.

Since we got elected, my colleagues and I from London and the surrounding area met the health officials in the London area. We kept meeting with them on a regular basis to make the linkage between us and them and the government, to make sure we have a good health system in London. We never cut the connections. As a matter of fact, I'm going to meet with them this coming Friday to tell them we in this House are working hard with our Minister of Health, working with this government in order to secure accessible, publicly funded and safer health care.

Last week, I had the honour to hold a public town hall meeting with my counterpart, the federal member Pat O'Brien, in our riding of London-Fanshawe to listen to the people and what they think, because you hear a lot about broken promises, but when you ask them to name a few, nobody can. People start talking and telling us, "You are going in the right direction. We elected you to save our public health care, exactly what you did in the education system."

The people are happy with our Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities because she'll put the freeze on the tuition for two years, working with colleges and universities to offset the loss of revenues. She has met with them many different times to listen to their concerns and has invested many millions of dollars to ensure all the programs are kept and enhanced.

Our government hired a former Premier of this province, Bob Rae, to go to the colleges and universities to listen to their concerns, collect information and see how we can improve our post-secondary education system in this province. Let me tell you, I have met with a lot of deans and presidents of colleges and universities in this province. They were very happy with his approach and with our government's approach, because for the first time they saw people coming to them and talking to them, listening to their concerns. This is a great way to deal with the people of this province.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): On a point of order: I would like to bring to the Speaker's attention a former member in the gallery, Julian Reed from Halton, a constituent of mine. Welcome, Mr Reed.

The Acting Speaker: Unfortunately, that's not a point of order, but it's great to have him here. I return to the member for London-Fanshawe.

Mr Ramal: This is our direction in this government: to work with the people of this province to make sure all their needs are being looked after. We have been talking about investment in education. We have invested millions of dollars to make sure all the colleges and universities are looked after. We have invested \$180 million over the two years for 13 new college and university capital projects, which is very important because so many colleges are crowded. They need space to implement and use their programs.

Another thing: The public infrastructure renewal ministry did a wonderful job. They are addressing and working with every area, every spot in this province to make sure there is accessibility: the roads, the highways. Besides that, they introduced a great bill. If that bill passes, it will make sure we protect our environment. As you know, buildings, houses, highways and roads are eating our farmland. This initiative will protect our beautiful farmland, which every one of us is dependent on. We have a beautiful province and we're entrusted by the people of this province to protect it, to look after it. It is very important to make sure the farm area is protected. This is a great initiative by our ministry and our government.

Another thing: Our government is making sure that all the water and sewage systems are protected and replaced to ensure the safety of this province. It created long-term infrastructure planning. We are developing the first ever multi-year infrastructure plan, over 10 years of public infrastructure. This long-term vision was never implemented before. We believe our responsibility as the people who were elected is to protect the environment, to protect the sewer systems, to make sure that all the cities and communities are connected—bridges, highways—all put together for the safety of our people and to ensure the safety of those people.

1740

I was astonished when I was listening to the past speaker talking about breaking promises. I was astonished when I listened to her saying what they did. If that job was done right, why did the people of this province vote them out? Because they broke all those promises. They broke their promises. They didn't respect the people. They introduced a budget, not in this place—it was in a private place called Magna—to please some people.

We're putting everything back on track. That's what we promised the people of this province: to work with them, to listen to their concerns. We are implementing all the elements which restore democracy and respect for all the pillars in our society and in our economy.

I'm fully convinced that we're on the right track. As I mentioned in the beginning, when I met with the people of London-Fanshawe last week, they told us, "You are on the right track." They had a few concerns, because they read in the media, read in the newspaper, listened to the radio, listened to some members from the opposition trying to create a fearful environment, telling them, "This is going to close; this is going to be demolished," but when we explained our plan to them, they told us, "We are 100% in support. Tell us how we can help you."

That's what people tell us. They are looking to support us because they believe in our government. It's the right government and the right direction to restore this province after the destruction of the last eight years. That's why I'll be voting against this motion, because I believe we're on the right track.

Since the honourable member who introduced this motion is with us today, I want to tell him, I want to tell the people of London-Fanshawe and whoever is listening

to us—I know a lot of people are listening to us tonight—we are working for you to make sure your hospital remains functioning very well, remains publicly funded and accessible to everyone. Also, we want to work with all the hospital officials to help them, to walk them through all the steps to balance their budgets. I also want to tell them not to worry, because our government direction is to protect them, to make sure they have safe health care, that they have publicly funded health care. That's why we are here: to work to defend their cause.

I listened a lot last week to many speakers tell us that we don't care about their issues. As a matter of fact, I want to tell you tonight that we are fighting hard to work with you, to be the advocate on your behalf. Our government listens to you, and our great Minister of Health is going to work hard to ensure that your service is in excellent shape and is publicly funded and publicly delivered.

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): I too would like to recognize the former MPP, Julian Reed, who, as Mr Chudleigh, the member for Halton, said, was a wonderful member of this House, and also at the big House, up at the House of Commons. He also had a wonderful career there.

Interjection.

Mr Wilkinson: I believe they have a pension; I believe the member is right.

It's an interesting opposition day motion that we have because Mr Runciman has said that he really is calling upon our government to fulfill the promises that we made in the platform. I couldn't agree with him more, personally. The thing that I always find odd is why the opposition is so intent on always reminding us about what they did to this province. If I had the legacy that they had left this province—and it had started with such hope. I always remember Mike Harris. Mike Harris is the reason I got into politics, because I disagreed with him fundamentally. He said, "I'm not the government. I'm here to fix government." I'm sure the member from Beaches-East York remembers that. "No, no; I'm not going to be part of government. I'm going to come from the outside. I'm going to fix things. I'm going to make things better." He started with such promise to his people, and what happened? What happened is that their legacy is in ruins. They have to deal with the fact that they left this province in terrible financial shape, unbelievable financial shape.

What I want to do is talk about our government, because we've been forced to deal with this problem. You have to play the cards that are dealt to you—maybe not the cards you want, but the ones you are dealt. That is the onus we have as government. What I'm most proud of is that instead of being partisan and saying, "Do you know what? The other guys were able to cook the books. Why don't we do that too? Why don't we just take all those little hidden deficits at the CCACs, the hospitals and the school boards; why don't we take that \$10-billion infrastructure deficit that's right across this province, all the money that was not spent prudently over the years but rather hidden away; why don't we do the same thing to the good people of Ontario?" But we didn't do that.

We have introduced a bill that says that the state of the books of this province will be revealed to all people by a third party, our newly empowered Auditor General, six months before the next election so that we are all playing with the same set of cards and we all have the same set of facts. We will never allow the people to be forced to make decisions at the ballot box based on information that isn't correct. That is a fundamental issue that I think goes to the heart of the government I'm proud to be part of. When faced with that choice, we decided to do the right thing. We decided to put an end to the Enron-style accounting this province was suffering from because the previous government was bound and determined to pretend this wasn't happening.

I remember Ernie Eves, a wonderful chap. He had a little trouble with the truth, though. He said in the *Globe and Mail* on May 17, 2003—

Interjection.

Mr Wilkinson: I say to the member for Lanark-Carleton that I remember him fondly—I see him very rarely. He said, “We are not running a deficit. We have balanced the books of this province for four consecutive years and we're working on the fifth one.” Unfortunately, he was having trouble trying to get that through.

Interjections.

Mr Wilkinson: And though I hear the siren call from the opposition—

Interjections.

Mr Wilkinson: What was that?

I hear the siren call of the opposition. It reminds me—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: I can't hear the member for Perth-Middlesex. I would ask the House to come to order.

Mr Wilkinson: I say to my friend Mr Wilson, that's why we have a health care system, just so we're ready for you. We don't want you to get overly excited.

It's beyond dispute that we were left with a \$5.5-billion, maybe a \$5.6-billion, deficit that we had to deal with. What did we do about it? We looked to ourselves as Liberals. We don't believe that the government is supposed to be for some. There are some people who believe you should be to the right. Other people believe you should be to the left. The question is, are you for all? You have to be able to move forward. I know that in my hospital, we find out—and you would just—

Mr Dunlop: Just tax and spend.

Mr Wilkinson: Now wait a minute. “Tax and spend.” We have a legacy from a rather bitter party to the right of me who believed in hiding a deficit and cutting, burning and slashing. That's what we were left with in this province. We inherited a huge deficit.

If you're going to cut, but at least you don't have a deficit, you can try to make an argument for that. If you say, “We're going to have a deficit, but at least we're going to improve services,” you can make an argument for that. But I tell you, the taxpayers, the people of Ontario, the children of Ontario lose when we have both cuts and increasing deficits. We have to change that,

despite the fact that we were left with a huge problem that we've inherited.

And we're going to make sure Mr Tory understands that he takes over a party which, if I'm not mistaken, sounds a little bit bitter. I don't know—maybe the other members agree with me—but I hear a hint of bitterness there, just a slight hint of bitterness, because they've decided that what they'd like to talk about on opposition day is the legacy that failed this province. That's what we're here debating today, that they have a failed legacy, and that's why I'm so happy to join in this debate.

It's not every time that I have an opportunity, at the insistence of the opposition, to come in and explain to everybody that yes, you're absolutely right, your legacy has failed. We have more debt now than when you took over. We have a mountainous \$50 billion more debt. And what did we get for it? We ended up with our children being caught in the middle, nurses being devalued and people on social assistance who were never given a raise. That's why I'm proud to say that we're always happy to debate your legacy, failed as it is.

1750

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much. That concludes the debate on opposition day number 3.

Mr Runciman has moved that the Legislative Assembly call upon the government to fulfill the promises made by Liberal Party leader Dalton McGuinty during the 2003 election, according to the original cost estimates as provided by the Liberal Party of Ontario.

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

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

PHOTO RADAR

RADAR PHOTOGRAPHIQUE

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): I would like to inform the House that there is a late show scheduled, and now I have the script. Thank you.

Pursuant to standing order 37, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

The member for Simcoe North has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Transportation concerning photo radar lobbyists.

The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes. I recognize the member for Simcoe North.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Is the parliamentary assistant here? Oh, it's Jean-Marc, yes. Thank you very much. I wasn't sure.

Why I asked for the late show is that yesterday I asked two specific questions to the Minister of Transportation. I'll read it out again:

“My question today is for the Minister of Transportation. Minister, we learned this weekend that your office was working with an agency called the National Campaign to Stop Red Light Running, which in this case was promoting photo radar, what we call the tax grab. Your office was aware that this group is a front for photo radar camera manufacturers, who stand to make outrageous amounts of money if photo radar is brought back to our province. Do you support this action and do you believe that big photo radar companies should be using your office as a promotional tool to promote photo radar and make outrageous amounts of money off of the citizens of our province?”

The minister’s answer was, “Let me tell you, I am always interested” in initiatives for public safety.

Everybody here believes in public safety on our highways. I can’t think of one person who wouldn’t want to make our highways safer, but he didn’t answer the question.

The other thing he referred to in his answer was, “The other thing is, I want to point out for the record that the red light cameras were in fact initiated by the previous government.”

Tell us something we don’t know. We understand that. I know Tony Clement started that program as a pilot project, but I wasn’t talking about red light cameras. I was talking about photo radar.

What’s disappointing here is that we sit in this House for question period. It’s only an hour a day, four hours a week. We sit approximately 30 weeks a year, if we’re lucky—25 weeks a year. We get 100 hours of question period.

I’ve listened to this government through almost three full sessions now since you got elected in 2003, and the only time you ever answer a question is when you get a friendly question from the government side.

Interjection.

Mr Dunlop: The official opposition and the third party continually ask questions—

Interjection.

Mr Dunlop: The questions are ridiculous. They’re insulting to people watching at home, anybody who does watch the parliamentary channel. It’s insulting to the media who sit here and are looking for some comments or some information that they think a responsible Parliament should give.

What’s really disappointing is that we don’t get any answers. It’s irresponsible on behalf of the government. I think Mr Takhar is one of the worst offenders. He simply doesn’t ever answer a question. It’s always, “Well, I believe in public safety. I’m the Minister of Transportation and oh, yeah, I believe in public safety. Thank you,” and sit down. That is what you get from this man over and over again.

From this side of the House, I would like to see a lot more late shows. If we have to have every minister sit in here on a late show to get some answers, I think it’s only fair. The Premier is worse than Takhar, actually. He hasn’t answered a question this session, except maybe—no, I guess he hasn’t had a friendly question.

The bottom line is that we know what the government is up to. They are bringing in photo radar. They’ve used the municipalities as a tool, through AMO, to ask the municipalities if they would support photo radar. Of course, McGuinty has gone out and said, “Yes, we’ll give you cameras if you wish.” That all happened at AMO etc.

We know that the next step will be the provincial highways. It’ll be back to the tax grab. What is ridiculous about the tax grab is that when the NDP were in power, even the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services called the tax grab outrageous, because he knew it was pulling in all kinds of money from the taxpayers of our province. It wasn’t targeting aggressive drivers. It wasn’t targeting those who are under the influence of alcohol. It was simply grabbing money out of the pockets of taxpayers in our province. I’m opposed to that.

What I would like the Minister of Transportation to do is at least come forward and be responsible and answer some questions, and say yes or no, that we will or we will not be bringing back photo radar to our province.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): Point of order.

The Acting Speaker: I cannot accept points of order during a late show. Take your seat.

Mr Baird: It’s not a late show.

The Acting Speaker: Yes, it is. Please take your seat.

Are you finished? I recognize the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): I’d like to thank the member for his question. Let me tell you, we are committed to the safety of our citizens in Ontario on any of the provincial highways, and also on municipal roads. But we are also making sure that if the municipalities are going to go ahead, it’s going to be left to them if they decide to go ahead with photo radar in their own municipality. We want to make sure we have the best cameras available to them. This is why we are meeting with the stakeholders.

Let me tell you that the former pilot project was started by Minister Clement at the time, and this all came about after a fatality that occurred in my own riding, in Orléans. A resident of Rockland called Michel Laporte got killed at the corner of the 10th Line and Innes Road in 1997—to be exact, on May 8, 1997. Mr Laporte launched a campaign with my good friend Mike Colle to make sure we have in place security in every municipality of this province.

The minister at the time the bill was passed, this pilot project, was Minister Norm Sterling, the member for Lanark-Carleton. He came up with the bill, which got royal assent on November 19, 2002. That year, 1997, there were five fatalities in the section of Ottawa called Orléans, and three happened at the same place on Innes Road in Orléans. Mr Laporte says that if there was a red light camera in place, we would reduce the number of accidents that would occur in a community like Orléans, and even Toronto or Hamilton, Sudbury—anyplace.

I could tell you that the fact that we have the proper camera in place, we have reduced enormously the

number of fatalities that occur in communities. Let me tell you, when he refers to photo radar, the government at the time, the NDP, introduced photo radar and the Tories cancelled that photo radar. Why? I agreed with you people when you cancelled it, because only Ontarians and those who had a licence plate on the front of their car were getting caught. It would mean that Quebec residents who would go at 150 kilometres on the 401 would never get caught. They couldn't get them. So I agree.

But today, this is why we are meeting with those companies. We want to make sure that we have the proper technology in place to respond to the need of those municipalities, because municipalities are concerned with the safety of all their citizens. If you look at the city of Toronto, right here—just go and see the police chief in Toronto. He would tell you how good it is for the community to have photo radar. This is why we are going to give the proper tools to all the municipalities in Ontario, and if they want to go ahead with photo radar, they'll have the opportunity, but we will make sure that

photo radar meets the requirements of this government. The McGuinty government always said we had to make sure we had the proper equipment.

Let me tell you, a Transport Canada report came out last week that said that we in Ontario have the least number of fatalities on the road right now in the whole of Canada: 6.9 fatalities per 100,000 population. So it is the best record, and we want to improve it yet, because last year was better than the previous year, but the year before that was really bad. So we have to improve the security of all people.

Oui, monsieur, je dis actuellement que nous allons faire sûr qu'ici-même en Ontario, nous avons en place le meilleur équipement possible pour répondre aux besoins de la sécurité de tous nos piétons, de tous nos citoyens.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much.

There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until 6:45 pm.

The House adjourned at 1802.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Brampton West-Mississauga /	Dhillon, Vic (L)		
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Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)		
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Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
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Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Hon / L'hon Steve (L) Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation	Markham	Takhar, Hon / L'hon Harinder S. (L) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
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Etobicoke-Nord		Mississauga West /	Delaney, Bob (L)
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Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Niagara-Centre	
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Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
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Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
St Catharines	Bradley, Hon / L'hon James J. (L) Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs		
St Paul's	Bryant, Hon / L'hon Michael (L) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique		

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

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

CONTENTS

Tuesday 16 November 2004

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Metis Nation	
Mr Dunlop	4125
Gordon Kennard	
Ms Horwath	4125
Healthy workplace award	
Mr Kular	4125
Scarecrow festival	
Mr Murdoch	4126
University and college facilities	
Mr Arthurs	4126
Pharmacists	
Mr Jackson	4126
Mr Delaney	4127
Steven Truscott	
Mrs Mitchell	4127
Consumer protection legislation	
Mr Wilkinson	4127

FIRST READINGS

Frederick Banting Homestead Preservation Act, 2004, Bill 146, <i>Mr Wilson</i>	
Agreed to	4127
Mr Wilson	4127
Pension Benefits Amendment Act, 2004, Bill 147, <i>Mr Levac</i>	
Agreed to	4128
Mr Levac	4128

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

Road safety	
Mr Kwinter	4128
Mr Dunlop	4129
Mr Kormos	4129

ORAL QUESTIONS

Taxation	
Mr Runciman	4130
Mr McGuinty	4131
Photo radar	
Mr Runciman	4131
Mr Takhar	4131
Health care	
Mr Hampton	4132
Mr McGuinty	4132
Mr Flaherty	4134
Mr Smitherman	4134

Chiropractic care	
Mr Hampton	4133
Mr McGuinty	4133
Contaminated soil	
Ms Churley	4135
Mrs Dombrowsky	4135
Consumer protection	
Ms Marsales	4135
Mr Watson	4136
Shelter services	
Mr Klees	4136
Ms Papatello	4136
Autism services	
Ms Martel	4137
Mrs Bountrogianni	4137
Assistance to flood victims	
Mr Leal	4138
Mr Gerretsen	4138
Pit bulls	
Mr Runciman	4138
Mr Bryant	4138
Assistance to disabled	
Mr Prue	4139
Ms Papatello	4139

PETITIONS

Pit bulls	
Ms Munro	4140
Chiropractic services	
Mr Hampton	4140
Mr Qadri	4140
Mr Murdoch	4141
Ms Churley	4141
Mr Marchese	4141
Mr Prue	4142
Mr Leal	4142
Mr Sterling	4143
Refundable containers	
Mr Ruprecht	4141
Landfill	
Mr Barrett	4141
Anaphylactic shock	
Mr Craitor	4142
Volunteer firefighters	
Mr Arnott	4142

OPPOSITION DAY

Liberal campaign promises, opposition day number 3, <i>Mr Runciman</i>	
Mr Runciman	4143
Ms Horwath	4144

Ms Broten	4146
Mr Dunlop	4148
Mr Prue	4149
Mr Crozier	4154
Mrs Witmer	4156
Mr Ramal	4159
Mr Wilkinson	4160
Agreed to	4161

OTHER BUSINESS

Correction of record	
Ms Horwath	4125
Mr Wilson	4128
Legislative pages	
The Speaker	4130
Notice of dissatisfaction	
The Speaker	4143

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

Photo radar	
Mr Dunlop	4162
Mr Lalonde	4162

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Mardi 16 novembre 2004

PREMIÈRE LECTURE

Loi de 2004 préservant la propriété familiale de Frederick Banting, projet de loi 146, <i>M. Wilson</i>	
Adoptée	4127
Loi de 2004 modifiant la Loi sur les régimes de retraite, projet de loi 147, <i>M. Levac</i>	
Adoptée	4128

DÉBAT SUR LA MOTION D'AJOURNEMENT

Radar photographique	
M. Dunlop	4162
M. Lalonde	4162