



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 13 December 2004

Lundi 13 décembre 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 13 December 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 13 décembre 2004

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CLARINGTON TRANSIT INITIATIVE

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I rise in the House today to pay tribute to the community of Clarington, within my riding of Durham, in recognition of their recent public transit initiative. The municipality of Clarington is one at the leading edge of fuel efficiency and environmentally friendly transit technologies and is the first to use the Canadian-developed technology called hydrogen fuel injection, with the recent unveiling of three buses in my community.

Pioneering this new technology is Canadian Hydrogen Energy Co, which is located in the town of Bowmanville within my riding. Essentially, hydrogen fuel injection turns water into fuel savings and reduces emissions from buses within the municipality of Clarington. Steve Gilchrist, vice-president of government affairs of Bowmanville's Canadian Hydrogen Energy Co, predicts that the new system will result in a 15% to 25% improvement in bus fuel economy, and a 50% to 75% reduction in emissions. This new system is also economically efficient, whereby this new form of technology for buses pays for itself. Mr Gilchrist highlighted that the cost of installing the system on the bus is rapidly repaid in savings, within nine to 15 months. Clarington Mayor John Mutton also recognizes the many advantages of hydrogen fuel injection, including reduced emissions, diminishing fuel costs and fewer maintenance costs.

Clarington is closely considering the installation of this system in Durham's ambulances and other municipal vehicles. I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate the municipality of Clarington and Mayor John Mutton for their initiative, which also will serve as a benchmark for other local communities within the province looking to adopt cutting-edge technology in the area of public transit. The Minister of Energy should look into this project immediately.

EATING DISORDERS

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Today, Family and Friends against Disordered Eating, also known as FADE, is hosting a reception at Queen's Park. FADE is a non-

profit charity that includes sufferers, parents, professionals and concerned citizens who are lobbying for adequate and accessible services for eating disorders in Ontario.

Today, the three main forms of eating disorders are anorexia, bulimia and binge eating. Eating disorders have the highest mortality rate of all mental illnesses. This is particularly distressing when one considers that a recent Canadian survey of young women found that 37% of 11-year-olds, 42% of 13-year-olds and 48% of 15-year-olds believe they need to lose weight.

On November 25, I urged the Minister of Health to save two vital outpatient programs, located at the Toronto General Hospital, for adults suffering from eating disorders. The hospital was planning to cut educational and group therapy services that serve 200 patients and to reduce their day patient program, because the McGuinty Liberal government told them to balance their budget and these programs are not core services. At the time, the minister assured me he would review the matter to ensure these publicly funded services, which do not exist in the community, would remain available.

Last week, I found out that the Toronto General Hospital cancelled the outpatient groups, reduced the day hospital program and is finalizing the inpatient reductions. Staff are working reduced hours to avoid layoffs. I urge the Minister of Health to stop these cutbacks so that adults struggling with eating disorders can receive the support and services they desperately need.

HIGHWAY 3

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): The preliminary design and environmental assessment study on Highway 3 between Leamington and Windsor was begun in the fall of 1999. Five years later, this study hasn't been finished, and in fact has been further delayed. The final public information centre was supposed to be this fall. Now, it doesn't even show on the schedule and I'm not sure when it will be held. The final environmental clearance on this project was scheduled for the winter or spring of 2005, and with the recent delay I really have no idea when the final environmental clearance will be given.

Highway 3 from Windsor to Leamington is a highway on which the traffic grows day by day. That is a major route for automotive products, produce and flowers, which must be shipped to the United States on a just-in-time basis. On behalf of the constituents of the ridings of Essex and Chatham-Kent Essex, I urge the Minister of Transportation to address this study delay immediately.

It's imperative that we get on with the safety improvements and four-laning of Highway 3 from Leamington to Windsor.

UKRAINIAN ELECTION

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): As we rise this week to celebrate the Christmas season with our families and friends, people in Ukraine will be fighting for democracy and a free society. I remember well when Viktor Yushchenko visited Ontario a couple of years ago. As the Ontario minister responsible for trade at that time, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to meet with him here at Queen's Park in May 2003. I told him then, as I'm sure members of the Legislature feel today, of our support for democracy and a fair, open and transparent election process, as well as expanded trade between Ukraine and Ontario.

The constitution of Ukraine limits the president to two consecutive five-year terms. This year's presidential elections take on particular importance for Ukraine and the Ukrainian people, after 10 years under President Leonid Kuchma.

On December 3, the supreme court of Ukraine annulled the recent presidential runoff election and called for another vote to be held on December 26, 2004. Tonight, the Ukrainian Canadian Congress is having a rally at Nathan Phillips Square in Toronto from 6 to 7 pm, in support of democracy in Ukraine. I will attend and I encourage members to do so. I commend the Ukrainian people for maintaining their protest peacefully and call on all members of this Legislature to show their support for the ongoing struggle in Ukraine.

EATING DISORDERS

Mr Shafiq Qadri (Etobicoke North): I'm pleased to rise in the House today to highlight a particularly important issue, and that is eating disorders; in particular, anorexia nervosa and bulimia. Historically there's been a perception that these conditions affect affluent young women of particular backgrounds, but this in fact is not so. These disorders are a group of serious, long-term illnesses that affect a broad range of society. Eating disorders are a serious public health concern affecting up to 140,000 individuals across Ontario, young and old. And contrary to popular perception, they cut across boundaries of race, colour and socio-economic status.

We hear a great deal about obesity, yet we lose sight of those women and men who are dying to be thin. Previous administrations have neglected to identify this pressing issue, and we must not repeat this mistake.

I want to take a moment as well, on behalf of all members, to welcome FADE, Family and Friends Against Disordered Eating, who are well represented in the visitors' gallery today. I would also invite all members to attend a reception hosted by FADE this evening. Many of these individuals have family members or friends who are gravely ill and undergoing treatment

as we speak. On their behalf, I ask all members to recognize their presence here as well as their hard work for this very worthy cause.

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LIBERAL CAMPAIGN PROMISES

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): Who breaks promises better than Dalton McGuinty? Nobody. In the 2003 campaign, Dalton McGuinty loaded up his warehouse with campaign promises of every size, shape and model. The theme was, "You want a campaign promise, you got a campaign promise"—in fact, 230 of them. But what they didn't tell you was that all their campaign promises were specially made just to be broken.

Over this past year, we have seen a fire sale of broken promises, with about 40 broken promises already hoisted upon the unsuspecting public. Do you want a tax freeze? Dalton sold you a tax freeze, but the warranty ran out only a few months later with the biggest tax hike in the history of this province. Do you want better health care? Well, I hope you didn't buy that one, because the small print in the contract has now been revealed: two-tier health care for chiropractic care, physiotherapy and optometry, despite a punishing new health tax. Stability in the health system: When you took off the fancy packaging, you found a belligerent health minister who has launched a three-front health battle with doctors, volunteer hospital boards and CUPE.

If you didn't like those 231 promises, they've got more for you, a whole bunch of promises you never dared to dream of: sushi bans, pit bull eradications and bicycle helmets every time you go out the door.

Who breaks promises better than Dalton McGuinty? Nobody.

HIGHWAY CLOSURES

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): As we swiftly enter the winter driving season in Ontario, especially in the northern parts of the province, it is inevitable that we'll see a number of highway closures over the next several months. Aside from the obviously heightened danger drivers face on snow-covered, icy roads, there is frequently an enormous inconvenience when conditions close down a highway for any period of time. This becomes even more challenging in the north, when often no alternate routes exist for travellers needing to reach their destinations; all the more reason it is absolutely vital that the Ministry of Transportation 1-800 lines, which are set up to alert drivers of rapidly changing conditions, must be accurate and quick in providing this information to the public.

I bring this up because there have been instances recently when this vital service was simply not available in a timely fashion. This past October, torrential rains in the Thunder Bay district caused several road closures between Thunder Bay and Schreiber. While the Ministry of Transportation did an outstanding job of getting the

roads reopened as quickly as possible, there was much frustration as stranded drivers could not access up-to-date information from the ministry's 1-800 lines, simply because it wasn't there. At a recent public meeting held in Schreiber shortly after the road washouts, Mayor Don McArthur told me it was in fact the number one issue brought up.

There is no argument that the ministry's priority during a road closure must be to get it reopened as soon as possible. However, whether it's a snowstorm, a washout or a traffic accident, it's vital that the ministry provide accurate information to the public on a priority basis as well. That is why the system was put in place. Certainly the public has a right to expect it to be there when they most need it.

PICKERING AIRPORT

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): I rise today to speak about the recent release by the Greater Toronto Airports Authority of a draft plan report for a potential regional reliever airport in Pickering. After over three years of technical studies and extensive community consultation, the Greater Toronto Airports Authority has compiled a comprehensive report which sets out a concept for an airport that could be developed over the next 30 years or more to ensure the air transportation needs of the greater Toronto area continue to be met.

When the planning process was initiated in 2001, I, along with other community members, was invited to be part of that process. This has been instrumental in shaping the evolution of this airport planning process, which is expected to move into the environmental assessment phase early next year.

While it is clear that there are neither funds nor the desire for unnecessarily duplicating airport facilities within the greater Toronto area, there is a need for long-term protection for additional capacity at an appropriate site. While extensive expansion has taken place at Pearson airport and there remains growth potential for Hamilton airport, there will be a need for an airport in the east to serve as a regional reliever that will complement Hamilton's role to the west.

I'm sure all members, especially members from Durham and York regions, would concur that an airport in Pickering would represent an economic development opportunity not only for these two regions, but for the province of Ontario. After 30 years of uncertainty in Pickering, it is appropriate that this comprehensive planning process proceed to the next stage, a thorough panel environmental assessment under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act.

I commend the GTA for leading this inclusive initiative, and I wish them well.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): When we came into office a year ago, we were faced

with a mess: huge hospital deficits, a growing list of underserved communities, wait times that were too long, nurses and doctors fleeing the province because the government didn't care, long-term-care homes going uninspected, and the residents being neglected.

We're turning the ship around and producing real results for Ontarians. We're helping hospitals balance their budgets with \$1 billion given to hospitals since we took office. We've invested in 2,400 full-time nursing positions and introduced a comprehensive nursing strategy last week. We have restored standards in our long-term-care homes, are hiring more staff, and are treating our seniors with the dignity and respect they deserve.

We have a plan to encourage doctors to work in teams so that one million Ontarians who don't have access to a family doctor are served better. We have unveiled a comprehensive wait time strategy to reduce wait times for cataract surgery, cancer care, cardiac care, hip and knee joint replacements, and MRI scans. We have brought on nine new MRI machines.

We are providing home care for 21,000 more Ontarians who need it. We have invested in community mental health for the first time in 12 years. We are reversing the downloading of public health because we don't think a provincial government should ever turn its back on protecting the public health of Ontarians. And we have increased support to community health services like Meals on Wheels.

It has been a year of change and a year that has produced real health care results for people in Ontario, because if our health care system isn't working for people, it simply isn't working.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent for the following motion: that this Legislature strike a standing committee on education, as promised by the Premier, which will be empowered to consider and report to the House its observations, opinions and recommendations on the effectiveness of education funding provided by the Ministry of Education. The committee shall produce an annual report.

That would be my motion.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): The member from Trinity-Spadina has moved unanimous consent. Do I have unanimous consent? No.

VISITORS

Ms Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I rise to recognize the parents of the great page Nicholas Kimchuk from Hamilton West, who are here with his twin brother in the gallery today. I welcome them.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): It's going to be one of those days—a point of order which is not a point of order.

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to introduce Greg Olszowka and Mark Bannister, tobacco farmers of Tobacco Farmers In Crisis.

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm delighted to introduce to you a former page who thinks this is the most exciting place in Ontario—and he says he's ready to take over my job in 2015—Grant Gonzales.

1350

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SUPPLY ACT, 2004

LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2004

Mr Sorbara moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 160, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005 / Projet de loi 160, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2005.

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

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): This legislation, which is commonly referred to as the Supply Act, is the formal approval of this Legislature of all the money that's spent by the government of Ontario over the fiscal year. This follows the process, first, of the budget, then of the standing committee on estimates, and finally the concurrence by this assembly of the estimates process that has been done by the estimates committee.

The bill gives the government the authority to spend money in accordance with the estimates and is part of our plan for a stronger economy and major investments in health care and education.

DOG OWNERS' LIABILITY AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ DES PROPRIÉTAIRES DE CHIENS

Mrs Munro moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 161, An Act to amend the Dog Owners' Liability Act / Projet de loi 161, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la responsabilité des propriétaires de chiens.

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

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): This bill outlines a vicious dog, one that has been responsible for severe physical injury, and then outlines the penalties for the owner in a way that might include, as well as a fine, a ban on owning a dog.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (SCHOOL BUS DRIVERS' LICENCES), 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (PERMIS DE CONDUIRE POUR AUTOBUS SCOLAIRES)

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

Bill 162, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to requirements for drivers' licences for school buses / Projet de loi 162, Loi modifiant le Code de la route relativement aux exigences à respecter pour obtenir un permis de conduire pour autobus scolaires.

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

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): On February 12, 2004, Allyceea Ennis was a four-year-old who was found in a dangerous situation on a bus. As a consequence, this bill attempts to amend the licensing procedures for persons driving a school bus so that they be required to have cardiopulmonary resuscitation/first aid training.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACTION PLAN

Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I'm proud to inform my colleagues in the Legislature that this morning the Premier and I announced our government's wide-ranging plan to build strong communities where women and children in Ontario can live free from the threat of domestic violence.

Our domestic violence action plan is a comprehensive, community-based approach that reflects the suggestions and recommendations we heard in our consultations with front-line workers and experts on domestic violence. They told us that the plan should rebalance services to strengthen community-based services, address the need for education and training for people who work in domestic violence, and get involved in long-term prevention to reduce violence.

That's what we've done. Our plan addresses four key areas. It talks about community supports, training, public education and prevention, and justice.

First, on the topic of community supports, the plan provides \$56 million for a broad range of community-based supports to help abused women get to safety, protect themselves from more humiliation and pain, and move on to rebuild their lives. We're increasing funding for shelters, counselling and housing supports. We're working with the violence-against-women sector to improve services for children who have witnessed or experienced abuse. We're funding community agencies to hire staff to increase their capacity for fundraising and become more financially independent.

Secondly, the plan includes \$5.9 million to address the need for training to help professionals and service providers recognize early signs of abuse—people such as emergency room doctors, nurses, teachers—and to help people who have informal contact with abused women at points where early protection and intervention are crucial, like family, like friends, like neighbours. We want them to be well prepared to offer the appropriate information and supports if they suspect a woman is being abused. Domestic violence could happen anywhere in our community. We all have a responsibility to protect women and children at risk.

Thirdly, our plan involves a \$4.9-million multi-faceted public education and prevention campaign. This campaign will include television advertising, Web-based information, resources for schools and pilot projects in communities.

One groundbreaking component of the campaign will, for the first time, target young people aged eight to 14 years. Experts believe that the major root cause of violence against women is the inequality of boys and girls from a very young age. We want to change attitudes and behaviours early and urge young people to break the cycle of violence. This morning, we had an opportunity to see some video clips of young girls just talking amongst themselves and the language they hear from those around them that encourages that kind of inequality. That's the cycle that we are determined to break. We want to motivate them to abandon the code of conduct that promotes gender stereotypes and inequality, and we want to challenge them to be the generation that ends violence against women.

Fourth, the action plan strengthens the justice system response to domestic violence, and we heard this throughout our consultations. This is our government's absolute commitment: Domestic violence will not be tolerated. May I say we will always be tough on abusers. We will evaluate and improve our domestic violence courts. We intend to review and propose an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to require the courts to consider domestic violence when making orders relating to the custody of, or access to, a child. We'll improve civic protections for abused women, including improvements on restraining orders and enforcement of breaches.

We are working across the government to better coordinate the many policies and programs that are contained within these four components of the domestic violence action plan. That's why I continue to chair a steering committee of 13 cabinet ministers, whose mandate is to lead the development and monitor the implementation of the plan.

Our plan also brings together a wide range of partners to improve public awareness, change attitudes and help break the cycle of violence. At this morning's announcement, we had over 50 groups come together to partner with us on our public education campaign, because domestic violence is everyone's concern. We all share a responsibility for the protection and safety of women in abusive situations. As a society, we must ensure that

women and their children can live freely and violence-free in their homes. Our work will continue until the violence ends.

I'm proud to be associated with a government that sees domestic violence as a priority and with a Premier who is committed to better protecting women and children who leave their homes in fear of violence.

Today was a great day. We were so pleased to have our ministers attending and the people who will help us effect this plan. In the end, we said, "All of us are responsible for ending domestic violence."

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Responses?

1400

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I am pleased to rise on behalf of our party and respond to the minister's announcement today. Although we certainly support the action taken by this government on domestic violence, it does fall well short of the government's election promises, which included: (1) an amendment to the Employment Standards Act to allow victims to take unpaid time off from work so that they can attend court proceedings involving the crime committed against them; (2) increased support to the provincial network of sexual assault centres so they can launch and expand awareness campaigns in high schools, universities and colleges; (3) expanded access to testing for date-rape drugs so that women who have been assaulted can go to their sexual assault centre, family doctor or local hospital and get the information they need; and, most importantly, (4) this government's commitment to pass, within the first year of government, strong victims' rights legislation that will ensure that victims have access to information and services such as dates for bail hearings and notification of when offenders are released back into the community.

Regrettably, the Liberal government has broken yet another promise by not passing a strong victims' rights legislative bill in their first year, as they promised. And for the record, it's important to note that it was our government that introduced and passed the Domestic Violence Protection Act on December 21, 2000, almost four years ago.

Having said this, women's advocates are already criticizing today's announcement. According to a story put out by Canadian Press shortly after the announcement, "People who run shelters for abused women in Ontario are less than impressed with a new government strategy to combat domestic violence.

"Some of the money will be used to help shelters become better fundraisers, which critics say is the wrong approach.

"Eileen Morrow of the Association of Interval and Transition Houses says shelters need guaranteed government funding, and notes they already compete with hospitals for local support.

"She says shelters should be the heart and soul of any plan that stops violence against women.

"Activist Pam Cross says it's insulting for the government to suggest women's shelters need help learning to

connect with their communities to become better fund-raisers.”

So already we can see that the announcement today certainly fell short of what had been anticipated.

But I want to move to another area related to violence where this government has fallen so short, and that is bullying. We know, and the minister has reiterated the fact, that boys and girls who witness or experience violence in the home are at high risk of becoming victims and/or abusers later in life. If we take a look at the recent articles in our newspapers, we can see that this government has done nothing this past year in protecting our children from bullying. In fact, some of these children have committed suicide because of a lack of any support. I say to this government, if you are to build the strong communities that you say you want, children should have the right to live free of fear and violence not just in their homes, but in their schools and their communities. I would also say that we all share the responsibility for the protection and safety of children in bullying situations. We need to place a new emphasis on preventing abuse before it happens and supporting victims when it does.

I was appalled to read in the *Toronto Sun* this weekend that Rachel Reid, a 14-year-old grade 9 Mississauga student, fearing for her life because she had already been assaulted at her school, swarmed and threatened with being “knifed to death,” has chosen to live now with her grandparents in Sarnia rather than risk returning to the school and the scene of the bullying. This same article continued that according to a Peel police search of its database, the school has called the police and they have gone there on a regular basis. In fact, from the beginning of the school year last September up until last Monday, there were 113 incidents at the school requiring police attention.

And let’s remember the death of Joshua Melo, 15 years old, who killed himself on November 26, after, according to his family, he was bullied. That was at Strathroy District Collegiate Institute.

I would say to this government, no child should have to move away from his home. I would encourage this Minister of Education to take action. He’s had over a year to do so. Instead, you focus on eliminating teacher evaluation and on bring-your-own-bottle-of-beer to the restaurant, rather than making sure our children can be protected from violence and abuse.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I’m happy to respond, on behalf of the New Democratic Party, to the minister’s announcement. I listened with interest to the announcement this morning, and I have to tell the minister and the government that they did put on a very fine show. But unfortunately, the four-year plan provides very little help to women already experiencing abuse to break that cycle of violence.

There have been two high-profile coroners’ inquests about domestic violence, conducted for the public interest, that have been followed by reports like *Walking on Eggshells*, which I have here, with a lot of recommendations that have not been followed up.

The strategy falls short of implementing the core recommendations, echoed by all these various reports, that strengthening women’s economic and social positions must be the centrepiece of any plan to break the cycle of violence against women and children. That means women must have access to adequate social and economic supports in the form of affordable housing, second-stage housing, income supports, daycare and employment protection so they can leave abusive homes and rebuild their lives. These reports have all called for such actions so women do not have to make the tragic choice between impoverishment and staying in an abusive relationship.

Let’s talk about housing for a minute. There remains an acute shortage of safe places to go. Women’s shelters are filled to capacity, and second-stage and affordable housing that women need are indeed in very short supply because of the cuts. The lack of housing options is among the two top reasons that make women in shelters return to the violent setting they tried to escape. It is reported that 90% of shelters know women who often, or most of the time, were making the decision to stay with or return to violent situations because of the lack of affordable housing available to them.

Let’s talk about shelters. Today, Ontario’s emergency shelters did not receive the sustained, adequate, stable funding as recommended by the Hadley inquest and women’s advocacy groups. For years, shelters have had to turn women away because they are filled to capacity, like the Three Oaks shelter, which had to turn away 268 women and children last year. Instead, today’s shelters were given funds for fundraising training, effectively sending the message that emergency shelters are left on their own to deal with the bed and program shortages.

Minister, this was really alarming, and OAITH and all the people in women’s shelters are very upset. They feel like you threw them to the wolves today. They’re being asked to compete with all those others out there, like hospitals, which are out fundraising like crazy, particularly in smaller locations up north and around the province. They do not have the capacity to fundraise any more, since the previous government cut funding to the women’s shelters. They have been fundraising, as has the second-stage housing. This government, in opposition and in the election campaign, promised to totally re-fund the programs in existing second-stage housing and then changed the terminology, changed the language, gave \$3.5 million—that was announced a little while ago and reannounced today—which is not going to the programs in second-stage housing, as promised, but has been spread very thinly across the province for all kinds of new programs, which of course we don’t object to; we need far more than what the government announced today.

Then there is the promise the Liberals made to build 20,000 new affordable housing units, but there are still no shovels in the ground.

Interjection.

Ms Churley: There still are not.

Their federal cousins have given \$300 million in funds for affordable housing, and it is the provincial Liberals who are holding up the construction. The \$300 million is gathering dust in a bank account instead of being used to build housing for 150,000 Ontarians. This has to change. We need to see that housing being built right away.

Then there is second-stage housing. I appeal to this government again today to keep its promise to provide adequate, stable funding for first aid shelters and to keep their promise to provide all the funding they promised for second-stage housing in this province. It is so badly needed.

DEFERRED VOTES

FISCAL TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2004 LOI DE 2004 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE ET LA RESPONSABILITÉ FINANCIÈRES

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 84, An Act to provide for fiscal transparency and accountability / Projet de loi 84, Loi prévoyant la transparence et la responsabilité financières.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1410 to 1415.

The Speaker: All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

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

The Speaker: All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Baird, John R.	Kormos, Peter	Runciman, Robert W.
Barrett, Toby	Marchese, Rosario	Scott, Laurie
Bisson, Gilles	Martel, Shelley	Sterling, Norman W.
Churley, Marilyn	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tascona, Joseph N.
Flaherty, Jim	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim

Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia	Witmer, Elizabeth
Horwath, Andrea	O'Toole, John	Yakabuski, John
Hudak, Tim	Ouellette, Jerry J.	
Klees, Frank	Prue, Michael	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 64; the nays are 25.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? There was a no.

To which committee would you like this bill to be referred?

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): It should be ordered for third reading.

The Speaker: There was a no, and I asked which committee it should be referred to.

Hon Mr Sorbara: Legislative Assembly, sir.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

May I just state again: Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? So ordered.

HEALTH PROTECTION AND PROMOTION AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION ET LA PROMOTION DE LA SANTÉ

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 124, An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act / Projet de loi 124, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection et la promotion de la santé.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1420 to 1425.

The Speaker: All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

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

The Speaker: All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Baird, John R.	Miller, Norm	Sterling, Norman W.
Barrett, Toby	Munro, Julia	Tascona, Joseph N.
Flaherty, Jim	Murdoch, Bill	Wilson, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hudak, Tim	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Yakabuski, John
Klees, Frank	Runciman, Robert W.	
Martiniuk, Gerry	Scott, Laurie	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 70; the nays are 19.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.
Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? So ordered.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HEALTH PREMIUMS

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Deputy Premier. This session has been marked by more broken McGuinty promises, a lack of candour, serious questions about the competency of your government and no answers in this House. Deputy, I want to revisit some serious questions we raised about the McGuinty “pay more, get less” health care scheme. We didn’t get an answer 28 days ago, and surely you have one now.

Last September, in the midst of the election campaign, Dalton McGuinty went to the Canadian Taxpayers Federation and signed a pledge that he wouldn’t raise taxes. Once in government, he introduced a \$2.4-billion-a-year tax hike under the guise of a health care premium. The CTF launched a lawsuit against the Premier for breaking his signature promise. Why did Dalton McGuinty spend taxpayers’ dollars to defend the indefensible in court, namely his political reputation?

1430

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I appreciate the opportunity the honourable member provides to remind him of what Ontarians all across this province know: An unprecedented investment in community-based health care services is underway.

What Ontarians know is that there’s a party in government in the province of Ontario that’s spending \$700 million more in our hospitals this year than they planned to; that we’re spending \$103 million to enhance the capacities of home care; that we’re spending \$191 million to significantly improve the quality of care for our most vulnerable in long-term-care facilities; that we’re working very hard to enhance primary care in a fashion which addresses the cruel reality of those two parties while in government: that under their watch community after community in Ontario was declared underserved from the standpoint of the necessary primary care resources.

Our government is going to be the one that reverses the terrible trend that they collectively created.

Mr Runciman: I think Ontarians are getting sick and tired of this flim-flam act: 28 days to get an answer, and we still don’t get an answer.

I have another issue that wasn’t answered before under Dalton McGuinty’s “pay more, get less” health scheme. Mr McGuinty said he wouldn’t raise taxes; we know he did. First you called it a premium. Then, unions started insisting employers pay the premium to their employees, so you clarified what it was all along: a tax hike.

You signed a pledge that you would have a referendum on any new tax increase, but then in May you said you wouldn’t have a referendum on this \$900-per-person-per-year tax hike. We first asked you this question 27 days ago. Surely, with your high-priced staff, you will have an answer by now. Why won’t you hold a referendum on your punishing McGuinty health tax as you originally promised?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The honourable member dares to stand in his place and talk about the high-priced staff that I have, when he was part of a party that paid the communications guy Gord Haugh a fantastic \$300,000 a year.

This is the evidence the honourable member presents: that he stands as a member of a party which has not yet accepted a very clear reality, and that is, on their watch, in their last budget, they all gathered up in Brampton and concocted a great big myth. It was the myth of a balanced budget.

The reality is that our party, barely more than one year in government in the province of Ontario, is overseeing a transformation of the health care system to put more resources at the community level, to make our hospitals more efficient and to save them from the challenges that they’re asked to provide through 12 years of lack of investment at the community level. This is the evidence that we’re working to build community services and a health care system that works as a continuum of care. That honourable member is still living in the lack-of-reality time of the Magna budget.

Mr Runciman: This minister is not only a bully, but he’s clearly a blowhard. We’re getting a double-B here.

I have another question—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Is that language unparliamentary?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. It’s too early into question period for us to be using words that may offend each other. So could you just complete your final supplementary?

Mr Runciman: It’s simply a very accurate description. I’m sorry if I offended anyone.

I have another question that we first raised 42 days ago that went unanswered, and we’re certainly not getting any answers today. As justification for your broken promises on tax hikes, you said wait times would

fall as a result of your McGuinty health tax. Then your own wait times expert, Dr Hudson, said that you won't even be able to measure wait times until the end of your government's term. Worse, he said that you can't guarantee that we'll get the waiting times down by then.

Minister, this is quickly becoming characteristic of your government's "pay more, get less" health care plan. You make promises before the election, only to break them after, and then you don't have the parts to provide any answers as to why. It begs only one question: Who's better at breaking health care promises? Nobody.

Interjections: No-o-o-o-o-body.

The Speaker: Order. Give it up. May I ask the members to come to order. Those who have not given up theirs, whenever they show them again, will automatically be withdrawn from the House.

Hon Mr Smitherman: I dare say the people of Ontario would probably feel quite strongly that it's those members who are best suited to the striped suit, after what they did to the people of the province. The only thing that surprises me a little is that, building on the Bad Boy theme, they haven't also moved along to using the little monkey instead.

This is the party that just voted against fiscal responsibility. This is the party led by John Tory—peek-a-boo—who, when asked about fiscal responsibility on CFRB on September 28, said, "I think that's a very good idea."

The member talked about wait times. Tomorrow we'll have an opportunity to expand on our announcement of \$107 million to enhance access to key services for Ontarians: hips and knees, cardiac, cancer and cataracts; more access to MRIs and CT scans—a 20% increase over a period of 18 months. These are the real actions of a government that's committed to more than the flim-flammery of their props.

NURSES

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): I have a question to the Minister of Health. It concerns your broken promises on health care. Minister, you and Dalton McGuinty promised to increase the number of hospital beds in Ontario and you and Dalton McGuinty promised to hire 8,000 net new nurses. Yet, this past session, you and every member of the Liberal caucus voted against a resolution asking that the Legislative Assembly call upon the government to guarantee that no nurses will be laid off and no hospital beds will be closed over the course of the mandate of the McGuinty government.

I have a very simple question; I'd like to ask why you and every Liberal MPP voted against this resolution to help you keep your own promise.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The honourable member asks a question about nurses. The fact of the matter is that in 12 or 13 months as a government, we've enhanced by more than 2,000 the number of full-time nursing positions in Ontario: \$25 million invested in our smallest hospitals,

and a further \$25 million invested in our largest hospitals, to create more than 1,200 positions; 600 positions alone in our recent announcement with respect to long-term care; 200 new nurses hired through our \$103-million investment in home care; and last week, 1,000 positions created for new nursing grads to give them the practical experience on the front lines of health care, to enhance their skills and make sure they are job-ready, to provide the necessary care and treatment to the people of Ontario. That is a record of success, and we will continue to build on it. We will fulfill that commitment toward 8,000 new nurses in Ontario.

1440

Mr Baird: I say to the minister, another day and another bunch of broken Liberal promises by this minister and by Dalton McGuinty. You and your government feel accountable to no one. Day after day after day, you come into this House and feel it's unnecessary to answer even the most basic question. We've been asking you these same questions for months, and you refuse to give us answers on why you're refusing to keep promises that you made to people in the province of Ontario in the last election.

I say to the minister, you and your party promised to hire 8,000 net new nurses. Yet right across this province, hospitals are making plans to lay off nurses and health care workers who are absolutely essential to keeping our hospitals running and patients well served.

You say, when we bring up these concerns, that we're fearmongering. You say it won't happen. Minister, you and every Liberal MPP voted against an opposition motion that would guarantee that no nurses would be laid off in the province of Ontario.

Will you stand in your place and, before you announce your response to those 65 reports calling for nursing layoffs in the province of Ontario, guarantee that no nurses will be laid off during your time as Minister of Health? Will you do that?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The honourable member has got himself twisted into such a fury to support nurses that he forgot one important fact: He was part of a government that called nurses Hula Hoops, that pronounced them redundant. He's part of a party that just voted against fiscal transparency, and now he stands to make all those claims.

The reality is, as I mentioned in my earlier answer, that we have already provided new full-time opportunities for thousands of nurses in Ontario. As we seek to continue to transform health care, build up our community sector and free up our hospitals to do the things that only they can do, we will continue to make the necessary investments to provide the care that Ontarians desire. That is our challenge. That is what we will deliver.

That honourable member cannot absent himself from one very clear reality: He was part of a government the leader of which said, "It is not our plan to close hospitals."

Mr Baird: Minister, the people of Ontario are watching. They listen to your rhetoric, but they watch your

actions. You and every Liberal MPP stood in your place and voted against a resolution calling for no nurses to be laid off in the province of Ontario. This House will adjourn on Thursday, and you have 65 reports on your desk from hospitals that are saying they're going to have to lay off nurses and other important health care workers. We want a guarantee that they won't be laid off.

Let's look at what this means around the province. In Chris Bentley's riding, the London Health Sciences Centre is planning to lay off 580 nurses and health care workers. In Jeff Leal's riding, the Peterborough Regional Health Centre is planning on closing 46 beds. In Dalton McGuinty's riding, the Ottawa Hospital has plans to lay off hundreds of nurses and close hundreds of beds.

I have a simple and direct question for you. You are the Minister of Health; will you stand in your place and guarantee that no nurses will be laid off in the province of Ontario on your watch? Will you do that?

Hon Mr Smitherman: This is a member of the party whose then leader and Premier, Mike Harris, said, "It is not my plan to close hospitals." What happened to the Wellesley Hospital? Closed. What happened to the Riverside hospital? Closed. What happened to Doctors Hospital? Closed. The fact is, that honourable member has no credibility except a more than eight-year legacy of stewardship for our health care system. The end result of that was what? The people of the province of Ontario spoke. They said to you, "Gone."

In response, this government, barely more than one year in office, is involved in making the single largest investments in community-based care, more than \$2 billion in additional resources this year for the Ontario health care system. We will continue to deliver on those excellent investments.

NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT SUPPLEMENT

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): A question for the Minister of Community and Social Services: One of the biggest disappointments with the McGuinty government is your failure to keep your promise to stop the clawback of the national child benefit supplement. The supplement is supposed to put money into the pockets of the most vulnerable Ontario families so they can pay the rent, put food on the table and put clothes on their children's backs.

Minister, why have you broken your promise? Why is the McGuinty government continuing to take \$200 and \$300 a month out of the pockets of the lowest-income Ontario families?

Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I'm very happy to address this issue. Let me say first that we have to start by telling the facts. The fact is that for the first time in 12 years, people on social assistance have seen a 3% increase in their rates. That's the first time that has happened in 12 long years.

Let me say also that from the moment we became the government, we immediately stopped the new funding

from the federal government that is in the form of the national child benefit, and it has remained with the families. That's a total of \$7 million. That's \$117 million more staying with families.

We've also talked to people across Ontario about what the needs of families are. What they've told us is that money they've used from this national child benefit funding has developed programs to reach children at risk.

Mr Hampton: According to the McGuinty government, if you put \$3 a month into the pockets of the lowest income and you take \$300 a month out, that's progress.

Last week, everyone was impressed by "Honest Deb" Peliti, who returned the \$40,000 that she found on the street. When the Premier met her in the hallway, she gave Dalton McGuinty a very clear message. She looked the Premier in the eye and said, "Say what you mean and mean what you say"; in other words, keep your promises.

Minister, you promised a big announcement on social assistance reform before Christmas. My question is this: Will you finally say what you mean and mean what you say, and end your regressive and unfair clawback of the national child benefit from the poorest families in Ontario?

Hon Ms Pupatello: I'd like to thank the member for bringing Mrs Peliti into this House; I was very pleased to see that. It was a moment where this House collectively agreed that those were the kinds of stories we'd like to hear about every day. The Premier especially appreciated meeting her and her children.

Mrs Peliti came here not understanding whether she would be able to keep the \$2,000 reward. What we made very clear is that in today's Liberal government, when we work with our municipal partners on how they deploy the rules on social assistance, we have discretion at the local level. It was there in the last government as well, but under the last Tory government, the last decision they would have made would have been to allow her to actually keep that reward money; that's different.

We are here for helping people. We will do all we can to continue to help families like Mrs Peliti and her children.

Mr Hampton: Deb Peliti is a very honest person and her directions were very clear: "Say what you mean and mean what you say." Why is that so difficult for the McGuinty government?

Before the election, you said, "We will end the clawback of the national child benefit supplement." You said, "The clawback is wrong, and we will end it." But Deb Peliti and her children have \$200 or \$300 a month taken out of their pockets because the McGuinty government doesn't keep its promise. She simply says, "Say what you mean and mean what you say."

I ask the question again, Minister. Will you finally end the clawback of the national child benefit supplement or will this continue to be another McGuinty broken promise?

Hon Ms Pupatello: Let me tell the member opposite this, to be clear: We have said from the beginning that \$42 million of this clawback goes directly to municipi-

palities that have developed programs for children at risk, that help all of these same families. These same municipalities are now asking us not to end the clawback, because they desperately need this funding.

On the other hand, the \$160 million that comes back to the provincial government is going forward to fund the Ontario child tax credit.

I appreciate that the NDP members here have no respect for low-income Ontarians who want the tax credit. However, we have serious decisions to make to account for \$202 million and determine what is in the best interests of low-income Ontarians. Do we help with the child tax credit? Do we cancel all of these programs for children at risk? Our children's minister has undertaken a review of all of those programs, and we will come to a decision—

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

1450

HEALTH PREMIUMS

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): To the Minister of Health: It's very clear that the McGuinty government never meant what it said when it talked about the clawback and it never meant what it said on health care. Dalton McGuinty promised better health care. Instead, the McGuinty scheme is pay more, get less health care.

You've whacked low- and modest-income people in Ontario with a regressive and unfair tax; you've cut important health services like chiropractic services, physiotherapy services and eye care; you've bullied hospitals into cutting hospital services, beds and jobs; and now you've finally botched your deal with Ontario doctors. So I say to the minister, why didn't the McGuinty government mean what it said on health care?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I appreciate that the honourable member gives me another opportunity to list off so many more of the accomplishments we've made with respect to the investments that we're making all across the Ontario health care system.

Earlier, I mentioned long-term care: 191 million new dollars. I mentioned home care: \$103 million for home care for 21,000 additional clients served this year. Community-based health care: the first investment in 12 years, of \$65 million. Operation Health Protection for Ontario public health: increased public health spending from \$273 million this year to \$469 million in 2007-08. Some \$600 million to create 150 family health teams to address the fact, sir, that when you were in government, you just shut medical schools. Nurses—I've mentioned before—more than 2,000 new jobs created.

Already, there's evidence all across the province of Ontario that this government is seeking to redress so much of what they started and what they came forward with. We will enhance those quality services. That's the commitment that we've made.

Mr Hampton: The only evidence is the evidence that the McGuinty government has become the health care grinch for ordinary Ontarians while you now play Santa Claus to the banks and insurance companies.

A single mom with an income of \$30,000 will pay 24% more in income taxes as a result of the McGuinty health tax. Meanwhile, what are you doing for those poor, impoverished banks and insurance companies? Why, they get a capital tax gift that's going to amount to hundreds of millions of dollars a year—those poor banks that have a \$13-billion profit margin this year.

My question, Minister, is, how do you justify the McGuinty “pay more, get less” health care, while you play Santa Claus to the banks and insurance companies?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The honourable member voted against Bill 2, which ended corporate tax cuts. His inconsistency on this matter is so well established. Then again, his inconsistency is generally well established.

The honourable member likes to talk about a single parent. The fact of the matter is that one of the initiatives we're most proud of is that we've expanded access to immunization, which will mean that for many, many parents, they'll save \$600 per child just through an enhancement to our immunization strategy.

I want to say that with respect to wait times, we're moving forward in a fashion that is designed to shorten lists and to address some of those chronic challenges which have been there for too long. These are the things that we ran on: enhancing access to wait times for hips and knees, for cardiac, for cancer, for cataracts and for MRI/CT.

The reality is that it was that party, while in office, that cut spending for health care. The reality is that our record is clear—a more than \$2-billion investment this year alone.

Mr Hampton: Here's the reality, Minister. Ordinary people who need to get access to a chiropractor and don't have the income now either do without or try to find somewhere else to cut. Ordinary Ontarians who need to see a physiotherapist, particularly low- and modest-income Ontarians, either do without or have to cut something else. People who need to see an eye doctor—and it's true virtually across Ontario—either cut something else out of their budget to see the optometrist or do without. Meanwhile, the McGuinty government is giving those poor, impoverished banks and insurance companies a capital tax break that amounts to hundreds of millions of dollars a year.

I ask the question again: How does the McGuinty government justify “pay more, get less” health care for ordinary Ontarians while you look after banks and insurance companies?

Hon George Smitherman: The honourable member likes to speak about ordinary Ontarians, but what he doesn't like to fess up to is the fact that a whole bunch of ordinary Ontarians, numbering about a million, don't have access to basic primary care in their local neighbourhoods and communities because his party, while in

office, decided that the appropriate strategy was to close medical schools and stop the production line of doctors.

What the honourable member also doesn't like to speak about is that this government has put a significant amount of the resources of the people of Ontario behind the renewal of family practice, behind family health teams. We're going to develop 150 of them, the first 45 this year, to deliver care to more than 2.5 million Ontarians, the most basic kind of care that people require for the ordinary Ontarians that the member likes to talk about. But the member doesn't like to live up to his record and his legacy, a very cruel one, which is to have prevented a million people from having access to the most basic medical care.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): My question is to the Minister of Health. My riding of Haliburton-Victoria-Brock is struggling with fewer doctors than it needs to deliver health care, and our local situation is becoming worse each month because of your failed McGuinty health scheme. The city of Kawartha Lakes is barely coping, with 15 fewer doctors than it needs. In January, a doctor in Minden is retiring and the clinic might close, orphaning thousands more patients.

My riding has the second-highest population of seniors in the province. These frail and elderly people have the highest need for health care, but you've done nothing to help them by alienating and maligning the very doctors we need to deliver the services they need. Thousands of patients across my riding will be orphaned because you are driving doctors out of Ontario and out of the profession.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Question?

Ms Scott: Minister, I don't want to hear your platitudes. I don't want to hear your reannouncements of any of your programs. What I do want to hear is, what are you going to do to fix the doctor problem in Haliburton-Victoria-Brock?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Apparently, based on the limitations of your question, you don't want to hear any reality either, like looking around you to the cruel reality that for eight years your party had the honour and privilege of being the government of Ontario and waited for so many of those years to enhance the capacity to produce doctors.

What have we done? When we arrived here, just as one example, Ontario had the capacity to provide residency spots on an annual basis for 65 of our international medical graduates, those foreign-trained professionals we hear about so much. Barely one year in office, there are 165 foreign-trained doctors in residency positions in Ontario today. Next year, that number will be 200.

Further, we're moving forward on an initiative to build 150 family health teams. Despite the pessimism of the honourable member, what I know for sure is that many of the communities in her very riding are lined up and have expressed interest already in one of our

government's family health teams. I can only assume, as we announce them—

The Speaker: The member from Kitchener-Waterloo, supplementary.

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): Once again, all we get is rhetoric. This minister once again fails to answer the question, just as the "pay more, get less" health care plan—

Interjections.

The Speaker: It must be time for Christmas with all this chatting going on. For the last time, remember, it's question period.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Supplementary, member from Kitchener-Waterloo.

1500

Mrs Witmer: As I said, once again this minister has failed to answer the question, just as your "pay more, get less" health plan has failed patients in Ontario.

Ontario's doctor shortage needs a minister who can work with, as opposed to alienating, doctors to address the issue. It has been 23 days since doctors overwhelmingly rejected your health plan. It has been 21 days since we asked you in this House what you were going to do about it. Today the public still doesn't know what your plan is to address the issue. One day you tell us you won't negotiate, then you flip-flop and say you will. Then the Premier, on Saturday in the Star, says you won't negotiate.

Minister, will you now admit you bungled the deal with the doctors and made a mistake in trying to impose an agreement on the 24,000 doctors? When are you going to officially resume negotiations, and when do you intend to have a deal in place so we can address the doctor shortage?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The honourable member, herself the Minister of Health in this province for three years, can't stand up and ask a supplementary; she has to read it. The idea that we've got 100 more international medical graduates today being given residency spots, which is one small step away from being in service to Ontarians—she calls that rhetoric; I call that progress for Ontarians.

On the matter of our work with the Ontario Medical Association, I'm very pleased to confirm for the honourable member that as of Saturday morning, we've been involved in very fruitful conversations.

SECOND-STAGE HOUSING

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): A question to the minister responsible for women's issues: Coroner's inquest reports and women's advocates all agree that without more shelters, second-stage housing and affordable housing, women are being forced not to leave or to return to abusive situations. Despite that, women's shelters did not receive the sustained, adequate, stable funding they need. Those funds are needed so shelters are not forced to turn women away, like the

Three Oaks shelter that had to turn away 268 women and children last year. Instead, shelters are told today that they will have to deal with the crisis on their own through fundraising. Well, Minister, shelters have been fundraising since the previous government's cuts in 1995. The well is dry. Will you revisit your domestic violence strategy to include sustained, ongoing funding to women's shelters?

Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I appreciate the opportunity to lay out a landmark plan that is actually so all-encompassing that it deals with four significant areas that have never been addressed historically by governments, and they all must be. It is a plan about community supports, about training, about public education and prevention, and about justice.

To the point that the member raises, I don't know what she heard today, but let me tell her and the sector what we are offering to strengthen the sector of community supports to deal with women who have found abuse and have finally fled. We are offering more transitional support funding for shelters and second-stage housing. We are also offering a refurbishment fund for second-stage housing and shelters. I hope to get through the rest of our lengthy list on the next question.

Ms Churley: That's nice, Minister, but that's not the question I asked. I'm talking about shelters. The reason shelters are in crisis is because of the shortage of second-stage housing and affordable housing. In the GTA alone, women in shelters now face a wait of up to seven months for housing; it used to be weeks. Your government seemed to understand that in opposition and on several occasions promised to reinstate funding for second-stage housing. But after the election, you broke your promise and instead the money went to 70 agencies for a brand new program. On top of that, you have not matched the federal funds of \$300 million for affordable housing in real time now.

The risk of being murdered is greatest in the year after women leave the abuser. Unless these vital services are in place, more women will die. That is the crux of this issue. You got it wrong today when it comes to shelters. I ask you again, will you commit to follow through on your campaign promises to restore core funding?

Hon Ms Pupatello: I think what's really important to note—and I think it was evidenced by the number of ministers who attended as well, as part of our ministerial task force: 50 different stakeholders who are all participating in our plan in some way. We said very clearly that community supports have to be addressed, because even the NDP government cut shelters by 5%. That was unacceptable. What we said to shelters is that they cannot be subject to the whim of the government of the day for whether or not they will be stable. We are coming forward with funding for shelters and second-stage housing, a new transitional support plan. It's not new. We are enhancing that fund, which is over \$10 million today. We have a new fund for refurbishment funding as well for second-stage and shelters.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): New question.

Ms Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): My question today is directed to Minister Pupatello concerning the domestic violence action plan announcement. I am very pleased that our government is moving forward with its promise to make a stronger effort to protect women and children from domestic violence. It is very forward-thinking to address such abhorrent societal issues in a proactive manner. I am both impressed and proud that the announcement you made today demonstrates that leadership.

While our plan is to focus on preventative measures such as changing societal attitudes and providing community support for both women and children in need, it seems to me that it is vitally important to address the practical issue of funding for second-stage housing at this point in time. Women and children will still need shelter. What are the plans for supporting second-stage housing in our communities?

Hon Ms Pupatello: I applaud this member from Hamilton, who has a genuine interest in the support providers of her community. Let me say very clearly, in particular, that where we have agencies that have really struggled over the last decade—in fact, since 1993 these agencies were either cut by the NDP or their funding was entirely eliminated by the Conservatives. What we are saying to this sector is, we need you to be strong. In our plan, we have said very clearly that we have funding available for them to do the transitional support work that they must do, and that is for shelters and second-stage housing.

As well, we've said that we need to refurbish this sector. We are putting together a \$2-million fund for second-stage housing and for shelter. In addition to that, I am tired of seeing these agencies drained and doing all of their work for women, in addition to fundraising. We are finally offering funding to assist them to make their sector stronger.

Ms Marsales: I am, of course, reassured by your message to the second-stage housing providers, who are currently operating on very slim budgets, especially in the Hamilton area, such as Phoenix Place and Second Stage Services. However, I am sure that second-stage housing providers would also be interested—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The members for Hamilton East and Nickel Belt, could you give the member a chance to ask her question without—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member for Hamilton West, will you complete your question.

Ms Marsales: I am sure the second-stage housing providers would also be interested in knowing the specific funds they will receive and when this will occur, as well as the long-term funding plans for their facilities. Would you please provide us with that information?

Hon Ms Pupatello: I am very pleased to tell people across the province that we have some 30 second-stage housing providers and, for the first time, this past

November we've reached out to the sector to actually engage and have a relationship with them so we can get back involved in funding them. The reality is that for the last decade they had absolutely no funding relationship with any ministry in the Ontario government. So the reality is, we are now working with every single one of these second-stage housing providers so that they will be viable. With the announcement today, they won't just be viable; they will thrive.

1510

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): A question to the Minister of Agriculture: Minister, it has become clear that Dalton McGuinty perceives rural Ontario only as the flyover counties beneath his jet as he flies from Ottawa to Toronto, or to Windsor. As you know, greenbelt farmers are about to see their lifestyles permanently and dramatically changed by your greenbelt legislation. You promised action, but an entire year has passed. Your accomplishments to date: a meeting, a lukewarmly received report and another meeting. And if you get up the nerve—you're feisty enough—maybe you'll ask Jim Warren's permission do to another press release about a meeting.

Sir, farmers have run out of patience. They want to see action; they want to see more than dust gathering on a report. I can say with full confidence that Minister Ernie Hardeman would have solved this problem a long, long time ago.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. Minister?

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Well, talk about commitment to agriculture. This is coming from a member whose government went through four agriculture ministers in five years. What kind of commitment is that to agriculture? That's quite a slap in the face to the farmers of this province.

As I've said before in this House, and this government has made very clear, we want to create a legacy for the citizens of this province. We want to ensure that farmers have land to farm on in this province. We want farmers farming land; we don't want farmers out there plowing or trying to plow asphalt. We're making sure that as we move forward with the agricultural advisory team initiatives in conjunction with other ministries, we're going to ensure that we have viability in the agricultural sector. Certainly we've demonstrated very clearly—we've come to the table with an additional \$10 million in support for plum pox eradication. We've moved forward with \$173 million in wedge funding for such areas as tender fruit.

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): Minister, page 8 of your election platform called Growing Strong Rural Communities states that your government would "guarantee a strong Ministry of Agriculture and Food." It goes on to say, "We believe"—

Applause.

Mr Hardeman: It goes on to say, Minister, "We believe that the role of the Minister of Agriculture and Food is one of the most important in cabinet."

Applause.

Mr Hardeman: Can't speak when they're making a noise, Minister.

Applause.

The Speaker: The member from Oxford.

Mr Hardeman: And it says, "We will make OMAF a lead ministry in a Liberal government."

Applause.

The Speaker: If we're not allowing the member to ask the question—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Any more of these outbursts and we'll have to take a recess until you all cool off a bit. Could you all allow the member to ask his question now, without any of this applause?

Mr Hardeman: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

Up until then, I agree with those comments. I think that's very important. But how does this government show your ministry is important? It cuts the budget by 20%; it excludes the minister from the important cabinet committees. To me, this is one of the most blatant broken promises your government has made. I guess some people will say anything to get elected.

Minister, will you admit that your government has broken its promise to Ontario's farmers by putting the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food on the shelf? Or will you step down, and let someone who can be a strong minister in the cabinet fulfill this promise? Maybe it's time—

The Speaker: Minister of Agriculture.

Hon Steve Peters: I can't believe the nutrients coming from that member's mouth right now.

Mike Harris said, "No cuts to agriculture," and in the first three months on the job they cut \$40 million out of the budget. As agriculture minister, I'm watching what's going on at Agricorp and not letting staff at Agricorp day trade under my watch.

We've moved forward very quickly: the Premier's agri-food summit, bringing all leaders of the ag industry and the food industry together; \$7 million for increased slaughter capacity; \$20 million for nutrient management; we've fixed the maple syrup assessment operations; we've exempted family-to-family land sales of farms. We're moving forward on many fronts. This is a government that's committed to agriculture. This is the second-largest industry in this province.

SEXUAL ASSAULT

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Today you announced what I would call an inaction plan, that contains absolutely no action on the crucial problem of sexual assault. I can't believe you're actually turning your back on women and children who have been

sexually assaulted by refusing to fund the very centres that help them. You just haven't made this a priority enough, even though you know—and I'm sure you do—that one in four women are sexually assaulted, and abused children, as we all know, wear those scars for life.

In your announcement today, not one word about sexual abuse, not one thin dime of funding from your government. Sexual assault centres like Hamilton's saw their funding cut. Before the election, you said you'd restore those cuts. Minister, why haven't you done that? Some 38% of sexually assaulted women were assaulted by their husbands, common-law partners or boyfriends. Domestic violence includes sexual assault. Where is the sexual assault in your action plan, Minister?

Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): We appreciate the question, because this member opposite probably missed the announcement last fall when the Attorney General announced \$1.4 million specifically targeted to this issue. I appreciate that we have to have a discussion much more fulsome than that on a very important matter around sexual assault. We also understand that public education and prevention are absolutely key.

Individuals who are experts in this area have applauded our plan, which has addressed \$5 million in the largest public education campaign this province has ever undertaken. If we don't get to the root causes of this inequality among the genders, we will never move forward on this important issue.

I appreciate this member's concern, and I will tell you that we expect to see fruits from this plan—something your government failed to do.

Ms Horwath: It's cold comfort to women and families who are currently dealing with sexual abuse to know that you have failed to act on their behalf.

The Hamilton sexual assault centre serves a growing number of clients, and it's stretched to the limit because you're not in the game with funding. In fact, sexual assault isn't even a listing in your government's directory of services.

Your Premier signed a commitment four years ago promising to reinstate the 5% that was cut from sexual abuse centres across Ontario. When are you going to live up to your Premier's promise and bring funding and services for victims of sexual assault up to where they need to be? Or is this just, as we all suspect, another McGuinty Liberal broken promise?

Hon Ms Pupatello: I know that the people who work in this very important area, who deal with individuals who have been sexually assaulted, would look at our plan today and say it deals with four significant areas, unlike any previous government's plan. What's so important is that it is a balanced plan. That balanced plan includes community supports, training, public education, prevention and justice. We have made announcements—last fall, and last April as well—dealing with those issues.

We will continue to move forward. I respect that we have a party in opposition that wants to stay in the 1970s.

We, on the other hand, are prepared to move forward and look at where we will be. It has as much to do with public opinion and public attitudes, that we are prepared to actually put funding on the table so that we can see significant shifts in attitudes in Ontario.

1520

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Today I was in the region of York representing you. I was pleased that with me were the members for Oak Ridges and York North. Both of them spoke very positively about your announcement. Of course, people are very excited about what we had to say. Minister, will you please explain to the House and to the people of Thornhill how the new children's treatment centre for families in Simcoe-York will work?

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): First, I would like to congratulate all the people in Simcoe-York region who worked so hard to make this treatment centre a reality: the members of the steering committee, the members of Simcoe York District Health Council, my colleagues in the Legislature who have reminded me constantly of just how important and urgent the need is and, most importantly, the parents of the region, who have been tireless advocates for their children.

Today we announced the approval of a children's treatment centre across York region and Simcoe county to support children with special needs and their families closer to home. This was the only region in the province without a CTC. Many of these families travelled to Toronto or even Hamilton for treatment. That changed today. We're making it easier for York-Simcoe families to get the services and support they need. A new children's treatment centre for York-Simcoe means those services will now be available throughout the region. The new centre—

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): She's reading.

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: Yes, Elizabeth, I'm reading; I'm tired.

The new centre will be a network of centres. Ten local teams in communities across the region will provide physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, as well as many other supports. We accepted their proposal because we know the people of the community know what's best for their children.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Supplementary, the member from Markham.

Mr Tony C. Wong (Markham): Minister, you are also aware that York-Simcoe is one of the fastest-growing regions in the province. How many children do you think you can serve, and when will the new network be fully operational?

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: The province will invest \$3 million next year to begin providing clinical services, and by 2006-07 it will be fully operational, with an annual budget of up to \$10.5 million, which will service more than 3,800 children in this very fast-growing region.

We recognize that Simcoe-York is one of the fastest-growing regions in the province; therefore, the formula we used to determine operating funds acknowledges the population growth in these communities. It's great news for these families. They were very excited to be there. They worked hard to make this happen. I thank all the members of the Legislature for informing me of the need. It was a very good day for the families of Simcoe-York.

HYDRO GENERATION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of Energy. In January, the Electricity Conservation and Supply Task Force issued a report which you respectfully endorsed wholeheartedly. On page 60 of that report, it says the phasing out of coal "would mean a price that is both higher and more volatile...." In fact, your friend John Manley has said that unless you make every effort to meet supply needs, Ontario could face an electricity shortage by 2007.

The problem is, you've been going around being King Coal, saying, "No more coal." Now you're saying, "We will need coal, just in case." Minister, you're doing the classic Liberal flip-flop. Will you stand in your place today and admit the election pledge to shut down coal plants by 2007 is now going up in smoke? Will you stand in your place today and say that, Minister?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I again want to congratulate the Electricity Conservation and Supply Task Force on their recommendations. In fact, we did act on a number of them; they were part of Bill 100. I remind the member that he voted against their recommendations. You voted against them. You spoke against them. You travelled the province and spoke against them.

Our government remains committed to replacing coal-fired generation, and we will identify the cleanest, most affordable potential power sources in Ontario as replacements for coal. We believe it's important to clean up this province's air quality. We're concerned about the CO₂ emissions from coal. We're concerned about mercury and particulates. We're concerned about the levels of childhood asthma we've seen in this province. We're concerned that we have had smog days in Algonquin Park and Sault Ste Marie.

We remain committed to replacing the coal-fired generation and, as I say and re-emphasize, we will identify the cleanest, most affordable potential power sources in Ontario as a replacement for coal.

Mr O'Toole: It's a somewhat disappointing response. Minister, I would not be surprised if you got a lump of coal in your stocking this Christmas. He knows he's going to need coal-powered or reliable sources of power

for homes and businesses that keep this economy and our standard of living going. The elimination of coal, everyone would admit, was an irresponsible election promise. It's clear the minister simply doesn't get it.

Generation isn't the same as flipping a light switch. You can't just turn power generation off and on. Minister, will you give the people of Ontario a straight answer for once? Which is it going to be: no coal and keep your promise, or there will be coal and another broken promise? Minister, which is it, or is this just going up in smoke in your face?

Hon Mr Duncan: I'll accept a lump of coal for Christmas, as long as we get coal out of people's lungs in this province in the time frame that we've suggested we'd do it.

Let me set the record straight, first of all, because the member didn't, about what the conservation task force said. They said they should maintain existing generation until new supplies and demand reduction measures are in place. That party, which did 14 megawatts of renewable generation, compared to our 395, doesn't get it.

You don't get the fact that the OMA has accounted for 1,800 premature deaths due to coal. There is a cost associated with that, both to our health care system and to our society. The member opposite just doesn't get the fact that we should not have smog days in Algonquin Park.

We remain committed to achieving our goal in the time frame outlined. We believe in better quality air, unlike the member opposite. Quit defending the polluters.

ASSISTANCE TO THE DISABLED

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Minister of Finance. Mr Minister, after all these many months, your ministry is still sending out letters to people who have applied for the retail sales tax rebate for vehicles purchased to transport persons with permanent physical disabilities. They're still being told, although the law is being changed, that their applications are being held in abeyance, pending passage of your laws.

Mr Minister, my question is very simple: How can you expect people to understand the gobbledygook you're sending out to them, and will you honour, as the Minister of Community and Social Services had, the program and pay these people who are in the waiting line, who have had the rug pulled out from under them?

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I just want to advise my friend from Beaches-East York that when the bill is passed, we will have a much better system of providing financial supports for those with disabilities, because we move away from just financing the purchase of vehicles by way of a sales tax exemption to financial supports that assist people with disabilities—and I think this is the point that the people of Ontario want to know—in home renovations that will allow them to live lives that are much more convenient than were they not to have those economic supports.

I want to tell my friend that we are very clear on our Web site about the pending passage of this legislation

and the improvements in supports that will result when we pass this bill.

Mr Prue: Mr Minister, the Minister of Community and Social Services stood in her place on November 17 and told the Chenier family that she would look into the matter. On that same day, she phoned them and told them that they were going to get the money from this very program, the program you are now denying to other Ontarians.

We want to know, if it's good enough for the Chenier family, and if that family is going to get their money, why are the dozens of other families that have applied under the same scheme and in the same time frame being told no? Clearly, the Chenier family are not the only ones who have been duped. There are many others. We are asking you, quite frankly, will you assure this House that you will keep your promises to all Ontarians? Will you shelve the plan to eliminate the rebate? Last but not least, will your government honour the same commitment to everyone that you have made to the Chenier family?

1530

Hon Mr Sorbara: The first thing I'll do is implore my friend from Beaches-East York to show some respect for a family that is suffering certain difficulties, and their request not to be made the subject of repeated question periods. I'm just advising my friend of that.

I also want to tell him that the passage of the Accessibility for Ontarians With Disabilities Act will be one of the significant achievements of this Legislature this sitting. Moving from a single retail sales tax rebate on a vehicle to comprehensive assistance for families who need to make housing modifications is a magnificent improvement, consistent with the measures that my friend the minister brought with the bill for Ontarians with disabilities. I commend them to my friend so that we'll pass that legislation and put those improvements in place by the time we rise on Thursday.

PETITIONS

CORMORANTS

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas cormorant populations in the Great Lakes basin have increased to over 450,000 birds over the past several years, are continuing to grow, and are significantly depleting fish populations; and

"Whereas numerous scientific studies have clearly shown the serious negative impact on fish stocks and freshwater habitats; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources continues to study the impact of cormorants and possible management strategies; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources has committed to experimental control of cormorants at specific sites;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the government of Ontario and the Ministry of Natural Resources to immediately begin to significantly reduce cormorant populations in areas where they are having a demonstrably negative impact on local fisheries through managed culls."

NORTH OF SUPERIOR PROGRAMS

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I have a petition.

"Whereas northwestern Ontario communities have been without essential mental health, addiction and child services since June 26, 2004, because of a strike at North of Superior Programs; and

"Whereas the North of Superior Programs' board of directors has failed to offer solutions to end the strike and has failed to achieve a quorum at important board meetings; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has recently dissolved ineffective volunteer boards in Parry Sound, Muskoka and Ottawa;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Ontario government to take over North of Superior Programs. Our communities need to be represented."

This is signed by thousands of residents in the communities of Marathon, Terrace Bay, Schreiber, Manitouwadge, Nipigon, Red Rock, Geraldton, Longlac and Beardmore, and I have affixed my signature to it as well.

ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): This is a petition that's written to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas there is no established province-wide standard to deal with anaphylaxis in Ontario schools; and

"Whereas there is no specific comment regarding anaphylaxis in the Education Act; and

"Whereas anaphylaxis 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, demand 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 put my name on this petition with full support and hand it over to Lee, who is from my riding of Brant.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION RESTRUCTURING

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I have here some 5,051 signatures sent to me by Mary Easter, who is with

a group called Parents for Quality Education in the Chatham-Kent area. I read the petition to the Legislature.

“Whereas the administration of both school boards proposed multi-tier busing in the community of Chatham-Kent;

“Whereas the Lambton Kent District School Board defeated the proposal April 27, 2004;

“Whereas the St Clair Catholic District School Board passed the proposal April 27, 2004;

“Whereas the requirement was that both boards pass the motion in order for the restructuring to move to the implementation phase;

“Whereas the administration of the St Clair Catholic District School Board determined to implement the restructuring without the Lambton Kent District School Board;

“Whereas the Lambton Kent District School Board reconsidered the April 27, 2004, motion on June 8, and voted to implement multi-tier;

“Whereas the public of Chatham-Kent has clearly indicated its opposition to transportation restructuring;

“Whereas the multi-tiered proposal was implemented on September 7, 2004;

“Whereas there have been innumerable problems associated with implementation involving the safety and efficiency of the multi-tiered transportation proposal;

“Whereas the implementation problems have resulted in serious educational concerns;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislature of Ontario to request the Ministry of Education to appeal to the Lambton Kent District School Board and the St Clair Catholic District School Board to revert from the new school bus transportation and start-time model back to the previous model used by the respective Chatham-Kent district school boards during the 2003-04 school year.”

HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, as follows:

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

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

“Whereas Ontarians already pay for health care through their taxes and will be forced to pay even more” when the government puts in this “new regressive health tax;

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

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario”—that’s us—“as follows:

“We demand the McGuinty Liberal government keep its promises and guarantee adequate provincial funding

for critical health services like eye, physiotherapy and chiropractic care.”

It’s signed by a number of people from my riding and Sudbury.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the funding formula used by the Ministry of Health provided only a 1% increase for Four Counties Health Services in Newbury; and

“Whereas Four Counties Health Services has a projected deficit of \$1.7 million; and

“Whereas the plan to balance the budget of Four Counties Health Services by 2006 recommends the closing of all beds at the hospital; and

“Whereas the continuing viability and operation is of critical importance to the quality of life of all citizens in the hospital’s catchment area;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, request a review of the budget/funding and consultation with the hospital board/administration/community to reflect the needs of our rural hospital and community.”

I’ll give this to our page.

YORK CENTRAL HOSPITAL

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It’s concerning the support for the York Central Hospital and reads as follows:

“Whereas there is an urgent need to update and expand the health care facilities at York Central Hospital; and

“Whereas the emergency department at York Central Hospital that was originally built for 25,000 visits now sees over 63,000 visits; and

“Whereas the population of York region has multiplied more than seven times since York Central Hospital was built, with no change to the hospital acute care infrastructure; and

“Whereas York Central Hospital has met 100% of the Ministry of Health’s internal planning requirements and is ready immediately to go to tender; and

“Whereas it is unconscionable to ask patients in York region to start from the beginning, with a new government process;

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

“That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, demonstrate its support of quality health care in York region by immediately announcing the approval of all phases of the major expansion and renovation of York Central Hospital.”

I’m pleased to affix my personal signature to this petition.

PIT BULLS

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly that was contributed to me at a reception at the home of Taposhi and Upendra Pai. It reads as follows:

“Whereas pit bulls are dangerous dogs, showing as a breed a tendency for vicious attacks on adults, children and other animals out of all proportion to their numbers; and

“Whereas jurisdictions where bans on pit bulls have been introduced have seen dramatic reductions in pit bull attacks on people and other animals; and

“Whereas residents of Mississauga and community leaders and law enforcement officials all across Ontario have supported a ban on pit bull ownership;

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

“That the government of Ontario enact legislation banning ownership of pit bulls in the province of Ontario, enact specific measures to require existing pit bulls to be muzzled while in public, and require existing pit bulls to be spayed or neutered.”

I support this petition, and I'll ask Adam to carry it for me.

1540

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's my pleasure to present a bundle of petitions here from Dr Johannes Baarbe, who's a chiropractor in Bowmanville, and his patients.

“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;

“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 this” hasty “decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services,” optometry and physiotherapy, “in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province of Ontario.”

I'm pleased to sign and endorse this petition on behalf of many patients of chiropractic in the province of Ontario.

GREAT LAKES POWER

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a petition signed by over 500 people in the St Joseph Island area. It says:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“We, the undersigned, hereby give notice of our objection to the planned outages by Great Lakes Power on St Joseph Island, scheduled for the month of December. We fully support the concerns of island residents and believe they have a right to comfort and safety of their homes during the winter and particularly in the Christmas season.”

I agree with this petition and will be signing it and giving it to our page from Sucker Creek on Manitoulin Island, Savannah.

HEALTH CARE

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads:

“Whereas the Liberal government has announced in their budget that they are delisting key health services such as routine eye exams, chiropractic and physiotherapy services,

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

“To reverse the delisting of chiropractic, physiotherapy and optometrist services and restore funding for these important and necessary services.”

I support this petition.

YORK CENTRAL HOSPITAL

Mr Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): I have a petition with regard to York Central Hospital via 1,161 letters and postcards. The petition says:

“To: Legislative Assembly of Ontario

“Whereas

“(1) Each year thousands of York region residents rely on receiving timely access to high-quality health at York Central Hospital;

“(2) The capacity of our hospital to meet the health care needs of local residents is falling behind;

“(3) York Central Hospital has a plan. A plan that is supported by the local community and the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care;

“(4) The community has already donated \$30 million to making the expansion a reality;

“We, the undersigned, submit 1,161 letters and postcards to this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to approve this year the funding for the major expansion and renovation at York Central Hospital.”

I have signed this in support.

LESLIE M. FROST CENTRE

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have petitions to reopen the Leslie M. Frost Centre and they read as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

I support this petition and affix my signature to it.

REFUNDABLE CONTAINERS

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition addressed to the Legislature of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment. It reads as follows:

“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 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 institute a collection program that will include all pop drinks, bottles of beer, wine, Tetra Pak juice and can containers to be refundable in order to reduce littering and protect our environment.”

I agree with this, and I sign this with a great deal of pride.

TUITION

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from Local 24 Ryerson Students’ Administrative Council, Local 92 Student Association of George Brown College and Local 93 Glendon College Students’ Union of York University.

“Whereas the Ontario Liberal government took an historic step forward by funding a tuition fee freeze for two years; and

“Whereas a majority of Ontarians support increased public funding for colleges and universities as well as reduced tuition fees; and

“Whereas increasing student debt through income-contingent loan repayment schemes or raising loan limits only increases the cost of post-secondary education for students from modest means; and

“Whereas per student investment in Ontario still lags gravely behind the vast majority of jurisdictions in North America;

“Therefore we the undersigned, supporting the Canadian Federation of Students’ call to increase funding for colleges and universities and reduce tuition fees for all Ontario students, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to (a) reduce tuition fees for all students in Ontario, (b) increase public funding for post-secondary education to at least the national average, and (c) implement an upfront, needs-based grant system for Ontario full-time and part-time students.”

ROYAL ASSENT

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in his office.

The Deputy Clerk (Ms Deborah Deller): The following are the titles of the bills to which His Honour did assent:

Bill 25, An Act respecting government advertising /
Projet de loi 25, Loi concernant la publicité gouvernementale.

Bill 63, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to hours of work and certain other matters /
Projet de loi 63, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d’emploi en ce qui concerne les heures de travail et d’autres questions.

Bill 73, An Act to enhance the safety of children and youth on Ontario’s roads /
Projet de loi 73, Loi visant à accroître la sécurité des enfants et des jeunes sur les routes de l’Ontario.

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

Bill 157, An Act to amend the Greenbelt Protection Act, 2004 / Projet de loi 157, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2004 sur la protection de la ceinture de verdure.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent for the House to sit beyond 6 pm today for the purpose of considering concurrence in supply and the Supply Act, following which the House will stand adjourned until 1:30 pm tomorrow.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Is there consent? Agreed.

1550

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

ATTRIBUTION DE TEMPS

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I move pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 82, An Act to amend the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996 to cancel the Professional Learning Program, the order for committee of the whole House be discharged and the bill be ordered for third reading; and

That one hour, split equally between the recognized parties, be allocated to third reading debate on Bill 82 and at the end of that time, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage without further debate or amendment; and

That in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Mr Duncan has moved government notice of motion 294.

Hon Mr Duncan: I'm pleased to rise to speak on this motion this afternoon. What the government is attempting to do on the whole education file is, in my view, the right direction. By dealing with Bill 82 tonight, we will remove what we think has been an unfair and unjust piece of work done by the previous government that has affected our educators in what I would call a very, very negative way.

On behalf of our party—and other members will be speaking at greater length to this momentarily—I want to stress that we recognize and appreciate the role of our teachers, elementary and secondary, right across the province.

I heard a very interesting radio advertisement not long ago, where the announcer asked you to name very quickly Hollywood stars and professional sports athletes, but then asked you to name a teacher who taught you or your children.

I'm pleased to begin this debate so we can end what the Tories did to the teaching profession in this province—end it today, once and for all. I'm proud of this government's record of achievement in education, hiring 1,100 new teachers. We're moving the province's education system back on to the right track.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'm not pleased to be standing to debate this bill at all, because it shouldn't even be before the House. This is a bill that I believe is going to do significant harm to the education system in our province. I also believe, quite frankly, that it simply represents a payoff, a payback to the teachers' unions in this province.

I read to you from the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario publication, called Voice. This is in their fall edition, the most recent, and I read a quote from the general secretary: "At this year's annual meeting Gerard Kennedy, Minister of Education, confirmed his commitment to dealing with two issues that ETFO"—Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario—"members have been campaigning on for several years: the repeal of the professional learning program ... and reform of the Ontario College of Teachers."

It's no secret that the teachers' unions have been lobbying for a number of years now, since our government, the past government, implemented the professional learning program for teachers. I might also say very clearly that it is a small minority of teachers who have been lobbying for the removal of the professional learning program. The vast majority of teachers fully support the professional learning program.

I want to read into the record some quotes. First of all, "Teacher testing and the professional learning program should not be regarded as something to fear in this profession. Those with confidence and ability will use it to further demonstrate their competence. This is long overdue." This was by Cathy Cove from Parent Network when Bill 74, the education accountability act, was introduced.

Another quote is from Terry Ross, who was a special-education teacher at the time at the Halton District School Board. It reads as follows: "While few of us like to be tested, we all know that a demonstration of competence is also a demonstration of professionalism. It is vitally important to ensure teachers entering the profession are fully prepared to respond to the demands of a teaching career. New teachers need to receive the support and be able to learn from the expertise of successful colleagues."

I go on to quote from Donna Luchko, a parent who sat on the school council of the Peel District School Board at the time: "The requirement of recertification every five years will help by ensuring that all teachers take some form of professional development."

I quote Marty Cugelman, retired teacher, Toronto District School Board: "The teachers will be helped by being allowed to select courses appropriate to their needs. Confidence in the school system will be improved when

the public sees teachers making an effort to keep up with new developments in their subject areas.”

Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): They always have.

Mr Klees: I hear a member of the Liberal caucus carping over there—they always have, and they do it anyway.

I'd like to read into the record this quote from Solette Gelberg, and instead of carping, I'd like the member to just listen: “Having been appointed by all three political parties in Ontario, at various times, to serve as a public member of a regulatory body, I was a public member of the Ontario College of Teachers council from its inception in 1997 until 2002.”

I go on, and this is what the member should be listening to now:

“The first council was told that between 25% and 33% of Ontario teachers had never participated in any voluntary professional development. Nevertheless, in the late 1990s, the” Ontario College of Teachers “council defeated the motion to institute mandatory professional learning and left it to the government to do so. Despite what the teacher federations say, most of the teachers with whom I have spoken support the college’s professional learning program. Changes could be made to the current program that would address some teachers’ concerns without dismantling a well-designed program. The mandatory assessment component could be removed.”

I want to make it very clear that I will be voting against this legislation, and so will, I trust and believe fully, all members of our caucus. The reasons are very clear. I’ve just read into the record the fact that it is not at all the majority of teachers who object to this. It is also not true that the vast majority of teachers voluntarily take training. As we have heard and as the record shows, there are some 30%, 33%, 35% of teachers who never take training. As with any regulation, as with any requirement, it is to ensure that there is compliance by the majority. In this case, it’s teachers who teach our children.

Members of the government, I say to you, wake up. This is not the place to compromise. This isn’t the place to be led by the teachers’ unions, to bring you as a government into compliance with their wishes; this is where leadership on the part of government should be demonstrated.

Yesterday, at a reception in my riding of Oak Ridges, I had a constituent come to me and say, “Look, I understand that the government is now going to be passing this legislation that will eliminate the professional learning program for teachers. How can you do that?” I took some time, as I want to make very clear today, that this is not the will of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario. It is not the will of our caucus. It is not something we would have done. And we did everything we possibly could do to ensure that the government had more time to consider their actions. What it has taken is a move on the part of this government to shut down debate. They have used their majority authority in this House to bring this

bill forward, and they are now time-allocating this bill, through the motion that we’re debating today, which means that we’re powerless. We have absolutely no power to avoid what I consider to be a major mistake on the part of this government.

1600

So this government is intent on rushing this bill through before Christmas, again, I say to you, without doubt as a payback for promises that they made to the teachers’ unions while on the campaign trail. While this government may well be able to deliver on this, there is a day of reckoning coming for this government with the teachers’ unions.

Laughter.

Mr Klees: Members in the backbench of the Liberal Party laugh today. They will not be laughing when the teachers are on strike because they haven’t been able to comply with another promise they made, and that is to load up when it come to teachers’ contracts.

Mark my words, chief whip, who laughs: I tell you that today you are facing a challenge.

The Minister of Education, in a four-page letter to school boards across the province, has now set the stage for what I believe will be a showdown the likes of which this province has never seen. The Minister of Education—the same minister—and the Premier, who have made a commitment to the teachers’ unions of this province on a number of fronts, have already taken the first step to interfere with the collective bargaining process that teachers have enjoyed over the years in this province. Effectively, this Minister of Education has initiated province-wide bargaining and wage controls for teachers in this province. Mark my words, teachers: This Minister of Education has made it very clear that there will only be money there for a 2%, 2.5%, 3% and 3.5% wage settlement agreement over the next four years.

First of all, I do not believe that it’s appropriate for that Minister of Education to have interfered in that bargaining process. I am going to ask the chief whip, who I don’t think still fully understands the reach of that Minister of Education’s letter, to brace himself for the day when the teachers’ unions awaken to the fact that this Minister of Education has now single-handedly changed how they negotiate contracts in this province from local board negotiations to central, province-wide bargaining. That, effectively, is the result.

Back to this legislation. The Ottawa Citizen, on May 17—and I want to read this into the record: “Education Minister Gerard Kennedy has cancelled the hated Tories’ ‘teacher testing’ program, in the name of labour peace. But what’s he going to replace it with?”

“Apart from journalists and teachers, there aren’t many professional groups left in Ontario where there isn’t some mandatory ongoing professional development. Accountants, police officers, firefighters and doctors are just some of the professionals who make additional learning a big part of their professional lives.”

I’m going to close my remarks because I want to leave some opportunity for my colleagues to speak to this. I

want to close with this: Not only is this legislation going to do harm to the education system in our province, but it also underscores one more time the fact that the Premier of this province shows little concern over breaking his promises once again; at saying one thing when he's seeking office while he's in opposition and doing something totally different and contrary when he is the Premier. On October 3, 2001, Dalton McGuinty said on Focus Ontario, "We will insist that all teachers continue to improve their teaching skill, as distinct from acquiring academic certification, which may or may not relate to how well they perform inside the classroom."

On May 22, 1999, the same Dalton McGuinty said, "I agree that teachers should be tested. New teachers should be tested. I think that teachers should be tested as nothing more and nothing less than professionals. So I think they should have the same responsibilities when it comes to testing as lawyers and doctors and accountants and architects and so on. They're all tested at the beginning of their professional careers in order to be admitted to the profession." That was then; this is now.

I read to you a quote from the Toronto Star, December 11, 2004, just a couple of days ago. The headline is "Ontario to Scrap Test for New Teachers." I quote Theresa Boyle:

"The province is scrapping a controversial qualifying test for new teachers, two years after it was introduced by the former Tory government.

"It was not much of a quality check," Education Minister Gerard Kennedy said yesterday, noting that 99% of those who took it passed it." Well, what was he expecting? That 99% fail? What is he going to expect? That 50% of teachers fail? Rather than celebrating the fact that 99% of the teachers were passing that qualifying test, rather than reaffirming the qualifying test, he said, "We'll scrap it because 99% pass it anyway," and now there's not going to be one.

It goes on to say, "The Liberal government plans to replace the test by next September with an 'induction year.'" Well, isn't that nice. He's scrapping a test. He doesn't have one in place to replace it, so we're going through an induction year. And through this period of time there's no need for the kind of testing that the Premier, in the past, had said is so important. It speaks to the inability of this government to manage, it speaks to the incompetency of this government and it speaks to the fact that they are only too equipped and too ready to simply do what those who got them elected demand that they do, whether it benefits the students of this province or not, whether or not it's consistent with the wishes of the parents in this province, who surely should have a say in the education system and who, I might say, overwhelmingly support the concept of teacher testing and certainly entrance exams to the teaching profession.

Speaker, I rest my case. I will be voting against this legislation. I say to you that it is not a good day for education in Ontario. This will be remembered. It is certainly not a proud day for the Minister of Education of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): It's my pleasure to rise from my seat this afternoon to talk about Bill 82, teacher testing. The teacher testing regime was one that people will recall was a big part of the former Conservative government's teacher-bashing tactics that they decided they were going to undertake early on in their mandate.

From my perspective, teacher-bashing should never have had an official place of any kind in Ontario politics, but when Mike Harris, Ernie Eves and the Conservatives were in government, they delighted in making teachers their enemy. They passed a number of different laws that attacked teachers. In fact, they made teacher-bashing a bit of a team sport when they were in government, where they ganged up on teachers every chance they could get. The program they had, of course, people will recall, was denounced by teachers for many, many reasons, so it's certainly a pleasure for me to rise today to speak to this bill that purports to get rid of teacher testing.

1610

The reason why the teachers denounced so vocally and so vehemently the Tory Conservative initiatives around teachers was particularly and primarily because it was an unnecessary move, particularly the issue around teacher testing. It was unnecessary by all accounts from the teachers' perspective, and in fact the Canadian Teachers' Federation indicates that more than 90% of teachers in Canada already participate in ongoing professional development with both informal and formal opportunities.

Why else was it inappropriate? It was an expensive program. The College of Teachers' 2002 business plan estimated the annual cost of running the PLP at over \$10 million. A \$35 fee increase was authorized by the college to cover its PLP-related costs.

Thirdly, it was a politically driven move, and I think most people in Ontario recognize that. Teachers certainly know that the best professional development is voluntary and self-directed professional development based on professional development goals that are derived from their own professional needs and their own priorities as teachers. It is not a replacement for lost professional development days.

People of Ontario, and teachers in particular, will know that New Democrats have always said that teacher testing was a boondoggle, that it accomplished nothing and disrupted everything when it was brought in by the former government. It was a typical *modus operandi* by the previous government. Conservatives really tended to make a mess of things, and teacher testing was certainly no exception to that rule.

Now it's the Liberals' turn, and what we need to see is whether they're going to make any less of a mess when it comes to this issue and others. We know they haven't invested at this point in time in implementing the Rozanski report like they had promised to do. They promised to shore up their investments in education, and they have fallen very short of that promise.

I think the public has come to the conclusion that, in a kind of open and shut manner, the Liberal McGuinty

government is a promise-breaking government. I think the people of Ontario, including teachers, recognize very clearly that the McGuinty Liberals can't be trusted to keep any of their promises. There was a time when Liberals said that they would never force a bill through using a method that we call here time allocation, but guess what? This bill has been time-allocated. This very discussion that we're having today is a time-allocated discussion.

I guess it depends on the time of day or the very day—maybe on a Monday, maybe on a Tuesday—as to whether or not what they say can be taken at face value. They said “no time allocation.” They said “openness, transparency, democratic renewal, open debate, accountability.” These are all things that the Liberal government has said time and time again, but every time we turn around, they're going back on their word in one way or another.

So first they said no time allocation, and today they time-allocate this bill. The McGuinty Liberal approach is hardly discernable, quite frankly, from the Conservatives of old when it comes to time allocation. Ironically, back in 1995, McGuinty supported teacher testing. The 1995 Ontario Liberal plan stated, “As part of our plan for reforming elementary, secondary and post-secondary education, we will strengthen teacher education by doubling the length of the preparation program to two years and requiring teachers to upgrade their certification during their careers.”

Under the Liberals, it looks like some teacher testing might be back, but perhaps in an altered form. The Liberals told teachers that the Professional Learning Program Cancellation Act of 2004 will be passed by June and that a discussion paper will be launched soon to find an alternative thereafter.

What we see instead is that the Liberal government appears to be dragging its feet on this bill. They're not sure what they want to do next. While we've seen other bills racing through this House, particularly in the last week or so, this bill has been called for only one long, single, solitary day of debate.

This past August, in fact, the Liberals floated their new discussion paper that proposes alternatives to the Conservative teacher testing schemes. Their solution may be Liberal teacher testing schemes. What does that discussion paper look like? Well, clearly, entry tests will be back. On page 16, the Liberals state, “Having an entry test to teaching is consistent with our approach of treating teachers as responsible professionals and is helpful to ensure student familiarity with Ontario curriculum and provincial education objectives.”

While the Liberals reject licensing sanctions, which is more or less when teachers' certificates are pulled for failing to take courses and upgrade their skills, they do note, “Some professional colleges set quality designations that have to be maintained by their members or the extra designations are lost. We look forward to having a revitalized College of Teachers consider this question.”

It's a bit of double-speak, from my perspective, when you talk about rejection of licensing sanctions and then turn around and say, “But really, if we're talking about quality designations that are not kept up with, then those extra designations would be lost.” It seems to me that it's a similar situation as the licensing sanction: If you're not keeping up with your designations, they get pulled—very similar to sanctioning on licences.

Nonetheless, what we really can see, I think, if we look closely is that the Liberals haven't at all lived up to their education promises. I'm going to take you through a couple of other areas, particularly in education, where this becomes very evident.

The Liberals claim that they will replace the Conservative teacher testing with something better. Unfortunately, as we already know, there's a credibility problem here. After promising to end the cutbacks in education, the Liberals have begun phasing in something called the transportation model that will mean cutbacks for over 30 school boards in Ontario. So somehow, a promise to end cutbacks is translated into cutbacks when it comes to transportation. Through the government's new allocation model for student transportation, some boards will see their school bus budgets drop by as much as 63%—a 63% reduction in their school bus budgets. That's a pretty serious cut for any school board to have to deal with. Some boards could benefit, however, from a reallocation of those funds. But more than 30 school boards across the province will see their transportation budgets slashed for the 2005-06 school year.

Having looked at those figures for the community that I represent and done a little bit of my homework, I've discovered that's the case for both the Hamilton district school board and the separate school board in Hamilton, both of which will have their transportation budgets cut in 2005-06. That's just one example in my community.

The member from Durham, who's here today, will know that the board in his area, the Durham District School Board, has already cut services in preparation for the funding loss that it's going to be experiencing when this model is completely rolled out. Almost 1,000 children have already lost their seats on their school buses as a result. These figures and descriptions of what these transportation models mean in terms of dollars is one thing, but what they mean in terms of how they affect children and families is quite another thing. We not only have 1,000 children who have already lost their seats in this particular scenario, but parents also report cases where one of their children rides the school bus and a sister or brother who attends the very same school has to be driven to school because there's no room on the bus. They know the cuts are coming and they can't expand the number of buses servicing the kids.

It's pretty tragic when you think about it. If you're a parent, imagine taking your kids, your son and your daughter, to the school bus. One of them gets on the bus and the other one goes to get on, and you have to hold him or her back by the arm and say, “No, honey. You can't go on the bus with your big sister, “or big brother.

“You’re going to have to wait and have mom or dad drive you to the school.”

1620

Kids don’t understand that. I don’t understand that, so I don’t know how children can. It’s certainly a cruel way to treat families, particularly as a result of transportation models that take away from some communities and re-allocate so that other communities do well. It’s the communities that have the money taken from them that end up in crisis situations, with parents and children who suffer from these cuts in ways that are just unbelievable.

There’s also the situation, particularly in rural Ontario, where parents are forced to walk their children to school, as a result of transportation cuts, on rural highways that don’t have any sidewalks. Talk about being a government that doesn’t have good foresight when it comes to the safety of children. On the one hand you’re putting all kinds of new regulations around school bus safety; on the other hand you’re making sure a lot of children aren’t going to be able to take the school bus, so their families have to walk them to school on roads that are unsafe for pedestrians.

The Minister of Education claims that this model transportation plan is just a draft plan, but what we see from the reaction of some of these boards is that the ministry is in fact currently phasing the program in. I talked a little bit about the effect, in rural communities, of this kind of transportation policy and it’s interesting, because in the city that I come from, we have quite a mixed array of areas where we have schools. We do have schools in rural communities and we also have schools in urban communities. What we’re going to see in Hamilton are similar situations, where kids have to walk longer distances to school, and particularly in the inner city will be facing serious challenges where we have high-traffic, speedway-type roads, where there’s a huge volume of truck and car traffic, particularly during rush hour, when children are trying to get to school safely. It’s simply an untenable situation for children to have to walk, with those roads the way they are.

It will also mean that, when kids are walking farther and farther to school, those who have a need, for example, for special education courses are not going to be able to get the transportation they need to get to the particular school that provides the courses. When they have to travel outside of their neighbourhoods, they’ll have to rely on some other mode of transportation. What that could possibly mean is that parents will have to choose, in many cases; in the community I come from, there’s a high number of low-income families, a high number of families dealing with issues of poverty. Those families are not going to be able to simply put their child in a cab or drive them, because they don’t have a car. It means quite a disruption, in regard to the rest of the family, to try get that child to school. I fear, and I certainly hope this isn’t the case, that some of those children will be going without the special education they require simply because the government has put together a transportation model that doesn’t have the foresight to

recognize the various needs these children should have fulfilled in the education system.

In Niagara, both the public and Catholic boards will experience a combined cut of \$3.8 million if the new model is introduced. Of that, the largest deficit is going to be experienced by the public board, at approximately \$2.9 million.

After promising a moratorium on school closures, the government has also decided to advocate for school closures. On the one hand, no cuts to education; on the other hand, the transportation model immediately indicates great cuts to education. The government talks about reinvesting in education, and yet we see it’s not fulfilling the recommendations of the Rozanski report: Promise a moratorium on school closures.

The very community I represent is facing school closures in both boards. The Liberals have started now to advocate for these kinds of closures. In fact, on December 12, one year ago, the minister announced the moratorium on school closures. He also promised that there would be a new funding formula to deliver an added \$177 million for rural schools by March of this year. This is the same minister who praised the Lakehead District School Board in Thunder Bay this year for their plans to close 19 schools, many of them rural. So when you talk about a government that says one thing and does another or that doesn’t keep its promises, you can really see quite clearly, particularly in education, that that’s the case.

Nonetheless, after promising more special education funding, the Liberals in fact clawed back special-ed funding from a number of different boards. In July, the McGuinty government announced \$100 million in funding for special education students. But shortly afterwards, the irony of it all is that the Liberal government then ordered school boards to hand back an estimated \$102 million that they had banked in special education reserve accounts as of the end of 2003-04. On the one hand they’re saying, “We’re going to invest in special education. Here’s a whole bunch of money—\$100 million,” and then on the other hand, they claw back or take away \$102 million. It seems to me that special education funding is at a \$2-million deficit, as opposed to actually an increase, which is what the government promised.

Much of the money has already been spent, however, by these boards on special education during the 2003 and 2004 school years. Most of the rest had already been earmarked, in one way or another, for special education programs during 2004-05. So what that means is that these cuts are going to have a serious impact on the opportunities for school boards to provide special education for children who require it.

The Conseil scolaire de district catholique du Nouvel-Ontario, Sudbury area, spent the \$384,000 that was in their books for August 2003 in the last school year, but the province wants the funds returned, even though they’ve already spent it. They’ve already spent the money, but they’re being told, “We need the money back.” So to make up the difference, that board is going to have to cut staff this year, in 2004, so they can pay the government back over \$384,000.

The Rainbow District School Board—again, in the Sudbury area—will have to give McGuinty \$2.2 million of their special education money. As a result, the board won't be able to hire special education teachers or educational assistants at all this year, as they had been planning. It will also have to cut the hiring of early reading intervention teachers by half.

How is this a new plan for education in Ontario? How is this a positive move forward to bring schools out of the crisis mode that they were in with the former government?

The Waterloo Catholic District School Board will lose \$880,500. The board will not be able to rehire 20 teaching assistants for special needs students who were laid off in the spring.

The examples go on and on: Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board.

I already mentioned Durham District School Board in terms of transportation. They also have educational assistants being cut.

The Windsor Catholic School Board: stripped of \$2.2 million earmarked for special education programs and services.

Quite frankly, when the government talks about making positive changes to education, they've missed the mark in so many ways. But as usual, the devil is in the detail. They make all kinds of wonderful, great announcements, and they stick by them until somebody starts going through the announcements with a fine-tooth comb—actually going through the plans with a fine-tooth comb—and then taking a microscope and looking at the difference between the plan and the actual announcement. Time and time again we see that, in fact, what the government plans to do is quite different from what they've announced and told the residents of Ontario they're going to be doing.

When it comes to teacher testing, quite frankly, we in the NDP have no difficulty putting an end to teacher testing. We think it's draconian. We think it was a piece of legislation in a regime that was loathsome, the former Conservative government. We have no problem at all supporting the removal of that odious system from our teachers.

But what you also have to remember is that we're going to continue to remain vigilant, and we're going to maintain our stand of observing, criticizing and uncovering what this government's really doing when they're making all of these pleasant announcements. We want to make sure that when they make these announcements, they mean them. We want to make sure that when they claim they're going to be doing something to make positive change for the people of Ontario, they're actually going to be implementing positive change. We want to make sure that the Liberals keep all of their promises and don't sneak through any of their unwelcome or unwise surprises, many of which we've seen already.

1630

Ordinary Ontarians are extremely disappointed with all the Liberal letdowns, but they can rely on us, the New

Democrats, to hold Dalton McGuinty's feet to the fire and make sure he keeps his promises, whether it's on teacher testing, whether it's on educational spending, whether it's on the things we were talking about today in question period in terms of programs for women. Any of these initiatives are all nice announcements, but it's up to us, and we continue to be dedicated to ensuring that those announcements aren't just a bunch of fluff but actually get implemented by this government. We'll be there every step of the way, making sure this government is held accountable for the announcements they make, so they actually implement the changes they tell Ontarians they're going to implement.

So the bottom line is: teacher testing, glad to see it go; all the other promises the Liberals have made, would like to see some of them implemented.

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I'm certainly glad to hear from the member for Hamilton East that the NDP will be supporting this bill, because I think it is absolutely consistent with what both they and we have said about the professional learning program that the Tories put in place.

On the process that Bill 82 is taking right now, I just want to make a couple of comments, because there have been some references by both the opposition parties to time allocation. I just want to state for the record that this bill has had 10 hours and 20 minutes of debate so far. Interestingly, the opposition has rung the bell for three hours of that. I think it's interesting that 18 people have had a chance in this House to speak to this bill and a number more have commented on those statements.

The point is that Bill 82 is a key campaign commitment, there have been many hours of debate on it and we're committed to moving it through. As well, there have been explicit statements from the Tories that they would move to delay this bill. We feel it is important that we move this piece of legislation through.

I want to talk a little bit about some of the practical reasons for this legislation. We said that philosophically we were opposed to the way the PLP, the professional learning program, was brought in by the Tories, and we're also opposed to the tenor of the relationship the previous government put in place with teachers.

But there is a very practical reason why this legislation should be removed and why this plan should be changed; that is, the plan hasn't worked. As of September 2003, one in five teachers hadn't even registered for even one course, let alone the five or six they needed. Teachers were voting with their feet. They knew that this program that had been put in place was not adequate, was not what they needed, and I certainly agree with the member from Hamilton East when she quotes the statistic that 90% of teachers took part in professional development anyway. That is certainly my experience of teachers. I don't think there is any question that the PLP, as it was put in place by the previous government, was a solution to a problem that didn't exist.

It actually reminds me of another debate that the previous government instigated when they talked about

the need to mandate teacher participation in extracurriculars; again, a solution to a problem that didn't exist. Teachers voluntarily take part in extracurriculars; teachers take part in professional development and always have.

This plan that was put in place by the previous government wasn't working. It was put in in a spirit of punishment and vindictiveness, and it was destined to fail. We said we were going to remove it and replace it, in conversation with teachers, with something that was actually going to work.

I want to talk a little bit about the nature, the complexity, of teaching, because I think that one of the things that happened in the previous regime with the Conservative government was that there was an oversimplification of what teaching is. There was a sense that the activity of teaching could be boiled down to some very simplistic imparting of facts and figures to a child, who is an empty vessel, and that's actually not what happens in teaching. Anyone who has taken the time to read in this field at all will know there's a very complex relationship between a teacher and a student, and there's learning that goes on in that relationship both for the teacher and the student. So whatever evaluation of teachers happens has to recognize that complexity and look at what that relationship is in the classroom. If you suggest that a teacher test or a teacher evaluation can be a simple paper-and-pencil test, after a teacher has been in school for years, or that there is a particular course a teacher or all teachers should take that will capture what a teacher needs to move forward and improve his or her teaching, then I think you've missed the point about what teaching is.

Neil Postman, in his book *The End of Education*, talks about teachers as world-makers, that what teachers do is form the future, because they work with our children and they help those children to think, to develop their critical capacity. In a world where kids are being bombarded by information, by multimedia, it's no small thing to help children develop a critical capacity, to be able to stand back from those media and the messages they're getting every day and say, "OK, what fits with my value system and what doesn't? What do I believe and what do I not believe?" That development of a critical capacity to a large extent of course is in the hands of parents and families, but to a large extent it is in the hands of our teachers, because children are in school for many hours a day. From an early age, we've got to be sure that teachers have the support and mentoring they need to be able to build that relationship.

Teaching can be a very isolating experience. Any of you who have taught will know that it is possible to go into a classroom, close the door and be with the children or the young adults in that classroom, and if you're feeling insecure or you don't have the supports you need, you can develop habits or ways of working with kids that aren't necessarily positive. So what needs to happen in order for teachers to feel supported is that those doors need to be opened, and the administrators, the superintendents and the people who have experience and

knowledge need to be part of that experience with the teacher. That's why mentoring is such a critical part of what needs to happen in professional development.

One of the things the member for Oak Ridges didn't mention was that his government cut the number of professional development days. They brought in the professional learning program but they cut the number of professional development days. One of the important aspects, one of the important ways that teachers can learn from each other, is to have those days with their colleagues in a school. Don't underestimate how important it is, for the learning in a school, to have the teachers able to talk to each other, to know what their common vision is, to share the code of behaviour, to share their consistent disciplinary measures, to share the way they are imparting the vision of that school and of the curriculum to those students. The previous government's cutting of the number of professional development days certainly is not consistent with the belief in strong professional development.

That complexity of the relationship—Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* talks about the nature of teaching in this way: "Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students of the teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher student with students-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow." That is not a simple process, it's a complex process, and I think we have to recognize that when we talk about professional development.

The other aspect of the PLP that was seriously problematic was that it was imposed without a discussion with the teachers. This is the 10th anniversary of the Royal Commission on Learning's *For the Love of Learning*. In one of the articles that has been written about that occasion, they talk about teachers needing more autonomy. That was one of their recommendations. The previous government professed to have a lot of respect for the royal commission's recommendations. Imposing on teachers a plan they didn't believe in and didn't think was going to work certainly doesn't speak to respect for the autonomy of teachers and for their professionalism.

1640

I think the imposition of the PLP, the spirit in which it was imposed, was seriously problematic for teachers in the province. I think it was indicative of how the relationship between the government and teachers was broken and torn in the previous regime. It was distorted to the point where I really worry about some of the kids who were in school for those years, how they perceived that adults got along, how they perceived that governments and teachers related. What was that relationship that was supposed to be supportive? I graduated from high school in 1971. It never occurred to me that the provincial government would be in a battle with teachers at our local school, but that's exactly what the students who grew up in the years between 1995 and 2003 experi-

enced: a provincial government that was in constant battle with the teachers in the schools.

That fear that maybe there was irreparable damage done to those relationships is something we're confronting as a government. We're having to weave back together the fabric of public education in this province, and that is no small task, given the damage that was done by the previous government. One of the ways we're trying to do that is to acknowledge that teachers should have an impact on what their professional development should look like, which has always been the case. Teachers have taken courses, they have developed courses for each other, they've developed them and delivered them within their boards, and they have made it very clear that they are professionals.

We respect that, and we're going to work with them to put in place mentoring programs and an induction year. We're going to look at restoring professional development days. We've already enhanced summer programs. In fact, 7,500 teachers sought last summer to take some of those math and reading instruction programs in order to be ready for literacy and numeracy programs this fall. So already that relationship is being restored. I don't know about the rest of my colleagues—certainly the members across the way—but I go into grade 5 and grade 10 classrooms on a regular basis, because that's where the civics and government curricula are. When I'm talking to the teachers, I sense there is a different tone in the sense that they don't feel besieged. They don't have to worry that every day there is going to be another assault on them. That's a function of our changing the tone and changing the discussion between the provincial government and teachers.

We're consulting with teachers, principals and boards to talk to them about what the best kind of professional development should be. We're not abandoning professional development—quite the contrary. We're going to put professional development in place that has to do with really supporting teachers, not hollow, meaningless, punitive programs.

I'm very happy to be supporting this legislation. I'm happy that we're going to be moving it through, and I look forward to hearing my colleagues on this debate.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I am very much interested in standing today and responding to this comment, but before I start, I just want to set a slightly different tone, as this may be the last time I have an opportunity to thank people in this House, as well as you, Speaker, and extend season's greetings to all. I'll start out with that sort of acquiescent tone that probably sparkles throughout my remarks this afternoon. There will be times, of course, when I digress from that, but I do mean that respectfully to the staff, and to the pages, who are spending their last time here. I hope they've enjoyed the entertainment. But more importantly, I want to thank my staff. I'm very privileged this term to have a legislative intern, Audrey Lemieux, who has been doing research for me on private member's legislation and notices and motions on the order paper. I'm not sure which Liberal

member she'll be working for next time, but I can assure you she's a valued asset in my office. I wish she could stay.

I also want to thank Regan Watts, who's just joined me here at Queen's Park as a new staff person. He's spent some time in Ottawa on various campaigns. Certainly he has made a valued contribution.

Many would know that I'm the energy critic. Laurie Leduc is my policy assistant in that area, and she's doing a remarkable job. I hope she and her three-year-old son, Riley, have a wonderful Christmas with her family.

Also in my riding office, Sheryl, Peter and Fern all provide what I would say is excellent customer service, really. We think of our constituency office as the one window to government where you can actually go and we will listen—not in the partisan sense, but we will listen to your concerns and certainly bring the government to bear. That would be whether I was a member of the government or a member of the opposition.

That small departure from my normal tone will now change, and I caution those who are potentially recording this at home that they may want to turn their recorders off. When I asked for an opportunity to speak on this time allocation motion, one staff person today summed it up best. Julie Kwiecinski, our House leader's assistant and the assistant to the chief party whip, said to me, "It's an egregious assault on democracy." That's a pretty stark and very controversial way to start a discussion, a debate in the House today, but time allocation is the actual motion, and they're time-allocating a bill that's had some traction and some controversy for many, many years.

I have listened to the speakers today, but I want to talk about the substance and nature of this particular motion. They're ramming it through; they're forcing it through. They're truncating debate, and any input has now ceased. They're not willing to listen to anyone.

In the few minutes I have, I can cite a few things, but first of all, what do the current Liberals think about time allocation? Well, this is for the record. This is Dalton McGuinty from Hansard on December 19, 2000, roughly four years ago. Here's what he said at that time: "For a government that promised to be open, this closure action is the height of arrogance, the height of exactly everything you campaigned against and you said you were for." That was Dalton McGuinty. He's the guy who said he was going to bring in transparency and accountability and all these fancy words. In fact, he has rammed through and time-allocated the mother of all time allocated bills last week.

Here is what Dalton said that same day in the same debate on December 19, 2000—I'm quoting. I'll send copies around to all the members here; there are very few Liberals. "I don't care what you people have to say when it comes to this matter. I've got all the answers." Imagine, they've got all the answers. He's got all the questions. This concludes the quote: "I run the government. I run the show." Well, if he's running the government, this is one example today where he has shut down the democratic renewal process itself.

Another person who has a lot to say about barking dogs and things like that is Michael Bryant, in Hansard on May 27, 2002: "I, too, choked when I saw that yet another debate-killing motion was before this Legislature.... They're sometimes called guillotine motions; they're sometimes called closure motions. The technical reference description, so that nobody knows what they are, is time allocation motions."

When in opposition, they said they would never use it. They were outraged any time the government took the time to force legislation through, and that's basically what they do. I would say that Bill 82—I heard the members prior to me speaking, and I just want to draw a little bit of historical reference. Many members here—a good number of them, actually—served some time as school trustees. I was one. I guess I was elected two or three times as a school trustee. As well, I did serve on a provincial body for the trustees' association. I was very much a part of the history. At that time, Sean Conway was the Minister of Education, a very nice gentleman. I was very impressed when I met him then, and I was impressed when I met him after. His row with teachers at that time was the teachers' pension issue. You may remember it was a big issue at the time, settling the teachers' pension plan. There was some dispute about what the liability was. It's actually in quite good shape today, but at the time they implemented that they were just outraged. They were furious. If you want to look to the history, it was probably around 1985, something in that time frame. So it was some time ago, and the battle continues.

1650

If you look at the history and you look at the next government, the NDP government, David Cooke was the Minister of Education for the NDP. He did a formidable job, in my view. I was talking to Mr Cooke the other night and had some chuckles with him because he's the very person—when they implemented the Royal Commission on Learning, Dave Cooke, the NDP Minister of Education, implemented almost everything but never got it into government. Specifically, the teacher testing, I believe, or the Ontario College of Teachers—it was Bill 33 back in those days; 1992, probably, or 1993. That was Bill 33, I recall at the time. I continue to watch these things.

At the end of the day, the organizations representing teachers—I like to respect teachers. I would say that. My wife is a teacher. I know how hard she works and I don't discredit any teacher at all. I think it's the teachers' leadership that needs to tone it down a little bit and realize that it's the role of government to set priorities and to allocate resources to achieve those desired outcomes.

My daughter was a secondary school teacher here in Ontario, now teaching in England—in fact, she'll be coming home for Christmas with her new husband in another week or two when the school year is finished there. I have another daughter who's married with children and lives in Australia. I'm quite familiar with the

different school systems and different approaches around the world.

There's no doubt that what was just said by the prior speaker was that there was some anxiety in teaching when we were in government. Much of that was style as opposed to substance. What I would like to recall is that—it's important to put this on the record. The Royal Commission on Learning was started by David Cooke, the Minister of Education for the NDP. We took those 130-odd recommendations and were implementing them: the college of teachers, the funding of education, the teacher testing model, strengthening the curriculum and reallocating resources equitably across the province. Those were all long-standing, and I can put to you that the battle for the Liberal government and Mr Kennedy has just started.

Why do I say that? There's a very good article in the Toronto Star, which is generally quite friendly to the Liberal government. That's their prerogative to do that. This article is by Ian Urquhart, and here's what is being said. I'm going to cite the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation. "Rhonda Kimberley-Young, president of OSSTF, the public secondary school teachers' union, issued a diatribe that questioned Kennedy's motives and declared, 'His actions are not helpful nor do they reflect the respect for educational workers and teachers of which he so often speaks.' I'm surprised and bewildered. But, there again, every Liberal commitment is generally a broken promise."

What did Donna Marie Kennedy, president of OECTA, the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, say? She "sent a defiant internal memo to her locals assuring them that the minister's letter would not change the union's position: 'Business as usual when it comes to unfettered local bargaining.'"

Emily Noble, from the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, was somewhat more conciliatory and said that the college professors got 3.65%. The implication is that they want more.

What has the government said? I want to put on the record in the government's own language that it's important to recognize that they told you—by the way, there was a four-page letter that was sent to the school boards. What it's saying here is, expect a 2% increase. That's what he's telling them.

Not only is that provincial interference in the negotiating process, but it sets a tone here. It says that funding for English as a second language and other programs cannot be used to create bigger pay increases in the collective bargaining. Kennedy proposed that the touchy issue of teacher workload, including prep time in elementary school, be kicked up to what he calls a special provincial bargaining table. Well, there is real provincial interference in the educational system. It's their way or the highway.

I would say he's interfering, because according to this article, some of the boards have already decided on 5% increases. Five per cent increases may be appropriate, I don't know; I'm not in a position to comment directly,

but here's what it costs. This is according to the Liberal Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review issued by Minister Sorbara, and it says here, "Compensation costs and wage settlements are key cost drivers and have a substantial impact on both the finances of broader public sector partners and the province," and the taxpayer. A 1% increase in salary for teachers—1% is the cost annually and cumulatively—is \$119 million a year. Each increase is \$119 million. What they're talking about in the reports I read is a 5% increase. That's getting close to a billion dollars for more wages.

The debate about Bill 82 is substantively this: It's some method of sorting out the very good teachers, who should not be capped by some grid, from those who probably shouldn't be in the profession. That's what this issue's about. You can't pay good teachers enough and you shouldn't pay bad teachers at all. They shouldn't be dealing with our children's future.

As the parent of five children, I think education is paramount. Public education and parent choice are extremely important issues. Today, in a very diverse, multicultural society, we need choices for parents. I understand that's controversial. But what they're saying in this bill is that, clearly, they're acquiescent to the teacher unions, in fear of the provincial negotiations they're undergoing.

In the limited time I have, I wanted to make those few points—referring to the Toronto Star article, referring to the Liberals' own budget—that they cannot afford it. Now, they can afford it and they probably will, and the way they've done it is they've increased taxes. They call it a health premium, a health tax. Every viewer today should write this down: Every income earner in this province will be paying at least \$50 every single month for the health tax, and it will likely go up. They don't call it a tax, they call it a premium. The issue here is, if you're making over a certain amount, you'll be paying up to \$75 or \$80 a month. So if a husband and wife or a couple are working, they'll be paying as much as \$150 per month. I don't think the people of Ontario realize how sad and shocking this tax increase was. It would be fine if it went to health care, but evidence has come to my attention that it's going to everything but health care.

They have an ongoing war. Mr Smitherman today and the city of Peterborough are wrestling with cuts to health care, with women's services. The same thing is happening in Durham, London and Ottawa. The doctors are upset. They rejected their contract. Sixty per cent of the doctors voted against it. Clearly, the tone they have, this kind of avoiding the conflict of it all, is kind and gentle, but the content is troublesome. We're headed—they're headed for the rocks. I say "we're headed" because I live in Ontario too. I'm concerned about stability and the quality of life in this province and I think it's being put at risk after 14 short months or so.

When I asked the Minister of Energy a question today on coal plants, he avoided the answer, which wasn't surprising. It's mismanaged. Energy prices by any measure are going to go up in the order of 20%. People

on fixed incomes whom I represent in my riding of Durham are in for a shocking ride of paying higher taxes and receiving less services.

I'll definitely be voting against this time allocation motion, which is unfair, intrusive and anti-democratic. It's clearly a chance for this government to do the right thing and allow a full debate so that the voices of the people of Ontario are heard.

1700

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-Baie James): C'est avec plaisir que j'ai la chance cet après-midi d'entrer dans ce débat sur le projet de loi 82, faisant affaire avec la certification des professeurs.

Laissez-moi dire premièrement que sur le concept—pas de problème pour retirer cette loi, que je n'ai jamais supportée quand le gouvernement conservateur l'avait mise en place. Je pensais dans le temps que ces mesures n'étaient pas appropriées et n'étaient pas nécessaires.

Laissez-moi vous expliquer pourquoi. Si la question à cette assemblée est qu'on va demander à ce que chaque métier et chaque profession soit recertifié tous les deux ans ou cinq ans pour quelque raison—et on peut avoir le débat dans cette assemblée. Peut-être que ça fait de bon sens. Par exemple, j'étais électricien par métier. Est-ce que c'est nécessaire pour un électricien de se faire recertifier tous les cinq ans, d'aller prendre des programmes pour être capable d'apprendre les nouvelles technologies dont il peut se servir dans son métier et de se recertifier, dans le sens de garder un certain montant de « training » en place pour être capable de garder au courant ses connaissances du métier? Je dirais que ce n'est pas une méchante affaire si on a une approche qui dit qu'on fait ça pour tous les métiers et pour toutes les professions.

Le problème que j'ai toujours eu avec le projet de loi que les conservateurs avaient mis en place était qu'il visait seulement les professeurs. Moi, j'ai dit, « Écoute, si c'est une question de viser seulement les professeurs, pour moi c'est comme si on essayait d'avoir une bagarre avec les professeurs, et pourquoi les cibler, eux? » Qu'est-ce qu'ils ont fait de mal, ce monde-là? Ils ont été qualifiés comme professeurs, ils sont allés à l'école, ils travaillent dans le système scolaire, soit au primaire ou au secondaire, et ils n'ont rien fait de mal, autant que je sache. C'est du monde professionnel qui font un bon job. Pour quelle raison est-ce que le gouvernement conservateur a décidé de dire, « On a besoin de recertifier, mais seulement les profs »?

Mon premier point est recertification; pas un méchant débat. Est-ce qu'on a besoin de cela? Je ne sais pas. C'est quelque chose qu'on pourrait déterminer à un autre moment. Mais dire qu'on va avoir la recertification seulement pour une profession, pour moi, ne fait pas beaucoup de bon sens.

L'autre affaire, et ça me donne la chance parce qu'on parle du domaine de l'éducation, est que le gouvernement provincial, dans ce cas-ci le gouvernement libéral, a mis en place des politiques de transport et a fait des changements à la formule de transport pour les autobus à travers

la province. Monsieur le Président, ce printemps vous avez vu des conseils scolaires autour de la province qui ont dit, « Écoutez, pour certains conseils scolaires il y a eu des réductions assez importantes dans leur budget de transport par autobus, et d'autres conseils scolaires ont eu des augmentations. »

Quand le gouvernement a introduit ces mesures—je pense que c'était au mois de septembre ou octobre, l'année passée—j'ai dit que ça allait causer beaucoup de problèmes, parce qu'une politique que tous les gouvernements provinciaux ont essayé de faire était de ménager une certaine habileté de coopération entre les conseils scolaires. Si c'est ou un conseil scolaire catholique de langue française ou de langue anglaise, ou un conseil scolaire public de langue française ou de langue anglaise, au lieu d'avoir quatre autobus différents qui partent pour ramasser les jeunes le matin, puis les ramènent à la fin de la journée, si on avait un système de transports en commun pour tous les étudiants dans la municipalité ou dans la région, on n'aurait pas besoin d'envoyer quatre autobus.

Cela a commencé l'année passée, avec le conseil à Timmins. Timmins a été le premier conseil dans la province de l'Ontario—ça fait déjà 20, 25 ans—à décider d'unifier leur système d'autobus scolaires pour s'assurer une coopération entre les conseils scolaires. Le gouvernement conservateur a dit, quand il est venu au pouvoir, qu'on avait besoin de mettre en place des politiques pour être capable d'augmenter la coopération entre les conseils de la province. Avec ça il y a eu certains conseils dans la province, où il n'y avait pas de collaboration en transport, qui ont fallu le faire avec le temps à cause de la loi et les politiques que le gouvernement conservateur avait mises en place.

J'ai dit à cette Assemblée que, comme je l'ai dit aux médias, quand le gouvernement libéral—M. McGuinty et M. Kennedy—a décidé de changer la politique et le financement pour les autobus scolaires, cela pourrait causer des problèmes, dans le sens qu'une certaine coopération allait être éliminée. Je me rappelle, quand j'ai posé la question au ministre dans l'Assemblée, qu'il m'a dit, « Ne vous inquiétez pas; il va toujours y avoir une coopération. » Je suis ici pour dire qu'à Timmins, cela est déjà arrivé: le conseil catholique de langue française a décidé de donner son propre service à ses étudiants. Pourquoi? Parce qu'eux autres, avec la nouvelle formule de financement, n'ont pas eu plus et ils ont décidé, comme conseil, qu'ils pourraient donner un meilleur service eux-mêmes que de le faire avec la coopération des autres conseils. Cela veut dire que les autres conseils auront besoin de se réorganiser pour le transport par autobus.

Tout ce que je dis est que le gouvernement n'aurait pas dû jouer avec la formule de financement de la manière qu'elle l'a fait, parce que cela a créé, quant à moi, le commencement d'un problème dans notre système. Au lieu d'avoir de la coopération pour des autobus à travers la province, on commence à voir, tel qu'à Timmins, des séparations de service où il y avait déjà une intégration.

So, like I said, I believe the government was wrong in changing the policy on school busing. I said in French just a few minutes ago that the policy and the funding formula the government changed this fall have, as I said last fall, led to certain school boards across the province unlinking the co-operation that existed between the four school boards in general areas.

In the city of Timmins, we've seen it happen already. Some school boards have been winners and some have been losers as a result of that and other issues that existed for a fairly long time within the in-common busing policies they have. In our case, the French Catholic school board has decided to go it alone for their own reasons: (1) because they can afford to do it and (2) because they think they can provide a better service. But the point is that rather than having an integrated school bus system for all four boards in the area, you now have one for the French Catholic kids and one for the other three, and who knows where that's going to lead? All I'm saying is, once the government started mucking around with the funding formula the way they did, they caused this problem.

It has always been the policy of the government of Ontario, no matter who was in power, to try to bring school boards together when it came to transportation. To the credit of the Conservatives, at least they put a policy in place that made that happen in places where it didn't happen in the past. With this change of funding formula that the Liberals have put in place under Dalton McGuinty and Mr Kennedy, we're now seeing an uncoupling of that co-operation, and I think that's a sad thing.

I also want to say to my friends here in the House—it is an education debate, and I have an opportunity to speak a little bit about native education in northern Ontario. I just want to remind members of a comment that was in the papers about a month ago, where the federal auditor was musing out loud about how there was no accountability within the native education system and how we were not getting the kind of results we should be getting for the amount of money we're spending, and then she said, "Well, maybe we need to do something about how we spend our money." At the time, I just came back into the House and I was appalled by the comments of the federal auditor, because it demonstrated to me a complete lack of understanding of what the issues are in First Nations communities across this province and, I dare say, in some cases across this country.

We have a situation in Ontario where the federal government funds native education, both at the primary and secondary levels. In funding that system, the federal government does not have the capacity, in my view, to offer the kind of assistance that the Ministry of Education, provincially, is able to give local education authorities—school boards, as we know them in our communities, but in native communities they're called local education authorities. All the federal government really does is transfer money. It does not provide the kind of support that I think they need to give to local edu-

cation authorities and local communities to be able to deal with the running of their schools. For example, special-needs education: If there's an argument to be made for anywhere in this province that we need funding for special-needs education, it is certainly within some of our First Nations communities. But there's hardly any assistance in current funding formulas federally to be able to respond to the needs of children, parents and communities when it comes to special-needs education in First Nations communities. The federal government, quite frankly, is missing in action.

I say it's high time that we have a debate in this province with our First Nations friends and with the federal government to look at whether it's time that we transfer education in native communities to the province. It seems to me that the province does a much better job, compared to what the federal government does. I know my good friend Mr Levac, the whip from the government side, agrees with me. He has six First Nations in his riding. He deals with First Nations. I know he's well respected by the people in that area, because I've met with some of his native leaders. They understand, as we do, that they just have to look at the provincial system in neighbouring communities and compare it to the communities within the native reserves, and there is a real difference as far as services. In some cases, the capital infrastructure might be in good shape; in other cases, it might be godawful, as it is in Attawapiskat, which I talked about in another debate.

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My point is this: It seems to me that if we want to give First Nations kids the ability to compete within our society, we have to give them the same tools that every other child has. One of the ways you can do that, one of the more direct ways, is to make sure that children have a good education system. It is the province that develops the curriculum that First Nations schools follow. It is the province that drives everything that happens in education in Ontario. Why wouldn't we sit down with First Nations and the federal government to look at finally transferring education over to provincial responsibility?

Does that mean the federal government should get off the hook? Absolutely not. The federal government has a fiduciary responsibility to First Nations, and we would need to have some mechanism to make sure that money stays in place. But it would then allow us to augment the system with monies from the province to make the education system better for First Nations kids.

The other issue, and the one that really upset me with the federal auditor, not the Provincial Auditor, was a complete lack of understanding of what the societal and family issues are that give rise to the poor performance in schools on the part of kids in a lot of our First Nations communities. You just need to travel. In many of the First Nations there is high unemployment. A community with good employment numbers has about 80% unemployment. Can you imagine, in this day and age in a modern community and a modern society, that when a First Nations community has 80% unemployment it's

considered good, as far as performance? There are no economic opportunities in many of these communities. They're pretty far away from where the main commercial centres are and where, basically, most of the jobs are. There are reserves that have been put far away, out of sight, out of mind, and there's not a lot of opportunity there.

In my household, I look at our two daughters, Julie and Natalie, who are 27 and 22. I think I got the ages right. Both have excelled. Both have done really well in school. Both have gone off to university. My eldest daughter has actually gone back to university and is taking a nurse practitioner's program. The youngest one is here in Toronto. I have to say something about Natalie, because if I don't she'll give me heck. But the point I make is this: They know that once they finish school there is employment waiting for them. That's a huge incentive: being able to give kids a will to do well in school and to excel. But if you're a child living on a reserve—let's say Martin Falls. Does anybody here know where Ogoki is? I bet you most people don't. I don't expect you to know, but that's my point, right? Ogoki is up in the northwestern part of my riding.

Interjection: Don't assume I don't—

Mr Bisson: I'm sure you do know some.

My point is this: We don't know a lot about First Nations and where those communities are and what the conditions are. The finance committee was out travelling. Pat Hoy, as the Chair, travelled with me, along with the rest of the committee, across northern Ontario into some of the reserves. It was a real eye-opener to people. They said, "Oh, my God, people are actually living in these conditions?" They couldn't believe it.

All I'm saying is, imagine being a child living in Ogoki, Peawanuck or Fort Severn, where there is 90% unemployment. How do you encourage children to learn and to grow and to really do well in the education system when they don't have a lot to look forward to when it comes to education? It seems to me it's a huge problem. So I think the federal auditor misses part of what makes an education system work, and that is a healthy community when it comes to employment.

What also makes an education system work is a healthy community when it comes to the societal issues within a community and how that community functions. We have the residential school syndrome. A lot of people sometimes glaze over and say, "What are you talking about?" Two generations of adults were either sexually, physically or mentally abused by the residential school system; I'm not saying everybody who was in the system, but a great majority. In fact, there was a conference in Timmins just a couple of weeks ago; I was talking to some of the people who attended in regard to the lawsuit that is currently going on with the Anglican and Catholic churches.

The point is this: You have a whole generation of people my age, people a little bit older and a little bit younger than me, who went through the residential school system and, quite frankly, lost their parenting

skills as a result of those schools. I tell the story of a friend of mine from Peawanuck who was snatched on Sutton Lake at the age of six—snatched. The child was out there with his mum and dad. They were living off the land. An airplane with skis called the Beaver landed on the lake. They grabbed Mike, put him inside the plane and took him away. The kid never came back for 10 years. That was his experience. So this poor child, snatched away from his family at the age of six—can you imagine?—was put in residential school. What his experiences are I will not talk about in this House, just to say that he had some problems in regard to how the residential school system dealt with him. He has actually turned out quite well, but many other people did not, because of the experience they lived with in these residential schools. By the time they were back in their communities, they were young adults at 18, 19 or 20 years old who had never seen parenting. They didn't have role models to base parenting on because they were not raised by parents; they were raised by either the Anglican or the Catholic church within residential schools. So those poor children grew up, became parents themselves, were dysfunctional because of their experiences, many times had alcohol abuse and in some cases drug abuse, and had problems parenting themselves. So the next generation that came behind had difficulties, and it's manifested itself back into the community with all kinds of issues.

All I say is, imagine how a school system runs when you have those kinds of problems in your community, on top of 90% unemployment. So I say we have a long way to go when it comes to helping kids in First Nations communities with education. But I think one of the steps we need to take is first of all to recognize what the problem is. Once we recognize what it is, we're able to deal with it. We have to give First Nations the tools they need to help themselves.

I am convinced and I am of the view that the federal government is doing an awful job. It's not going to get any better. They've been at it for over 100 years. They have not done anything good that I've seen. Come and visit any community in my riding and you'll see it.

I think the province has to engage itself in some kind of debate with First Nations communities to look at how we can play a much more positive role in assisting First Nations to develop a better education system for kids in those communities. Maybe one day young children on reserves will be able to look forward and think about what is possible and contribute back into their community and the province when it comes to this wonderful province we live in.

Mrs Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre): I'm pleased to stand and speak about the time allocation for Bill 82, the status of the professional learning program. Everybody has stood up and actually spoken in terms of how it impacts and affects the teachers, and there is no question that it does. But I think the real focus we should be concentrating on is exactly what this does and should do for the student—and it doesn't do a darned thing. In

fact, it wasn't designed really thoroughly on how it impacts the student. It was a hastily designed piece of legislation because the government of the day was in a contest with the teachers' unions, and it was a little bit of "let's get back" as opposed to "let's develop."

Having said that, that's done. That's the reason why it needs to be repealed. You really need to sit back and engage the people who teach the students in the process of how you go about professional learning. There's absolutely no question in anybody's mind. I've never met somebody who wanted to be a poor teacher. They all went into teaching because of their love of children and because they want to do the very best they can in their profession. But like all professions, it grows, it evolves, it changes. There are new ways of teaching. There are new curricula. You can't live in a vacuum; you must constantly have professional development. If you don't, then you impact the child you're supposed to be teaching, the student. Whether it's at a kindergarten level or at a grade 12 level, it really doesn't make any difference.

The challenge is, how do you engage the teachers in the process in a meaningful way that makes a difference in their own professional lives, so that it becomes the student, the parent and the teacher all working together on behalf of the students themselves?

That's the part that wasn't in this particular bill. In fact, all it simply said was, "Go out and get 14 credits—seven in core and seven in elective—over a five-year period of time," and then you would be certified. But that didn't deal with issues around—I mean, you could be certified in rock climbing, for all that mattered. It was an elective. That didn't indicate how it impacted, changed and evolved into better teaching practices to impact the child in the classroom. That's what you need to do with professional learning.

That's what businesses do when they invest a huge amount of money—and businesses do, more in other countries than in Canada—around professional learning. They sit down with their employees, they look at their needs and goals, and then they develop the programs that impact those employees so that they can impact the business for that company. That's really the same as we're doing, or what we should be doing, with students. You need to be able to sit down and say, "What are the goals we wish to achieve and how do we achieve those goals with the professional staff we have?"

To suggest that we just have a few professional days and that would do it is really wrong, I think. Learning is lifelong, and ongoing on a day-to-day basis. So as the teacher is assessing the child in terms of what the child is learning—and every teacher assesses on a daily basis different kinds of assessment tools to evaluate how the student is doing—that same teacher, in essence, is evaluating themselves. A good teacher knows when they require additional professional learning and engages that. Usually, it happens after school: after 4, sometimes in the evenings, often on weekends and very often during the summer months, when everybody thinks teachers have holidays.

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We know that how children learn is different. Literacy, for example: The benchmarks for literacy have changed significantly over the last few years, and how we engage teachers to teach literacy, especially to children with English as a second language, is quite different from teaching children who already have English as their first language. How we teach children who have English as a second dialect is much different from how you teach children with English as a second language or English as a first language.

Teachers need to be taught those things. Many of them are not taught in the colleges. A really good example of that is around special education. Special education is not, per se, taught to any great extent in teachers' colleges. Most of that is learned on the job through professional training in the school boards.

What I think we've made a huge mistake about is not investing in that professional development in a significant way. If you look at a very large school board, or any school board, for that matter, and you look at the amount of money that's been allocated toward professional development, you'll find it's maybe \$1.50 per teacher. It's a ridiculous amount of money. They've been very creative, actually, in how they've got around their professional development. But, in fact, if you want to have an impact, then you have to invest in that employee, and the best way to invest in that employee is to sit down with the employee and look to the goals the employee wants to achieve: Are they consistent with the goals that you want to achieve in that school? That's how you engage a professional development program, and most school boards have them.

Now, what happened in the last few years is that we haven't had the best relationship with teachers. Sometimes we get confused, because the teachers' unions have their job; they have their role to play and they do play it. But the teacher in the classroom, as someone said, is often isolated and needs that consultant to come in, needs the professional evaluation that a principal is to do. It's their responsibility, or the vice-principal's, or ultimately a supervisory officer's, to ensure that what's happening in that classroom is affecting properly the learning of that student.

The best way, as I said, is to sit down, to engage the teachers, for example, in a staff room. A principal often will sit down and say to the school, "What are the goals in our school and what is it we wish to achieve? Is it literacy? Is it numeracy? Do we have to have more engagement with those students in co-curricular activities? What is it that we need to do as a school?" It will be different in Cornwall from Wawa, in Ottawa from Windsor. It doesn't make any difference. The fact remains that the children are different in different communities. So then they sit down and work out together the initiatives that they wish to achieve, how they put in place the professional development for those teachers to achieve them and how they engage either inside or outside support services to make that happen.

Sometimes there's a province-wide initiative, such as literacy, where the province will say, "We'll give you X number of dollars, and then you develop a program around literacy in your school that meets your needs." If you go to schools where this works, it really works. The reason is, it's not punitive. They're not saying to the teacher, "You're no good—and by the way, I want you to teach this curriculum, even though you're no good." They're saying to the teachers, "You have the basics, you have the understanding, you have the ability to learn, you have the ability to engage that student, and we're going to give you additional resources to make that happen."

That's how you engage the teachers themselves in the process so that it isn't a punitive measure. Then you get good professional development. It's a real win-win for the students, as opposed to sitting back and saying, "I think we'll just impose these seven mandatory elective credits here. Regardless of what they are, you're certified. End of discussion." That isn't how it works. It can't work that way, because it's in separation or isolation from the students that the teachers themselves are teaching.

When you look, as well, at the standards, the College of Teachers is one of the areas where they could actually meet the criteria for imposing certification. But there were, in fact, other areas that were interested in looking at whether or not they could be certified as well: The Ontario curriculum learning centre was one; the Ontario Principals' Council was another. Professional development is not isolated just to teachers. Vice-principals, chairs, principals, supervisory officers, and for that matter directors and trustees, all need professional development if they are going to continue to evolve with those students. Even physics has changed. You can't rely on what you knew before. You have to constantly engage in what's new. Even the benchmarks that children are identified with are new. There are new benchmarks to help us know how children learn differently.

As a parent, what is it you'd really like? You want to make sure that the teacher in the classroom with your student is the very best teacher, and you want to make sure that your student, along with those other students in that classroom, is doing well. They're really not particularly interested in the school down the street or across the road or in Victoria or wherever; it's their child and their school at this time, and they want to make sure that child is succeeding and learning to go on to the next level of education.

So our responsibility as a government, and school boards' responsibility, is to ensure that that teacher who has core competencies continually has access to good professional development that they feel engaged in, and not that it's punitive and sort of put on them as a step, that they have to do it whether or not it impacts what's happening in their classroom or in their particular school.

As I said, you know, the schools are really quite different. If you go across the province, some of them have extraordinary homogeneity in terms of their ethnicity; others may have 50 different countries that are en-

gaged in the one school. Some schools have a high focus on literacy; others will have it on numeracy. Some are really engaged in computer literacy or the environment. I mean, there's just a whole slew of different opportunities that are out there. So the cookie stamp doesn't work for everybody. You have to be able to say, how do you engage that teacher in that school to make an impact on those students at this time? It's not all that difficult, and the best way to do it is to engage the teachers themselves in the process to begin with. It's a little bit of, you get more with honey than do you with vinegar.

I think if people were really honest, they'd really look at the bill, the professional learning program, and they'd recognize that it really had very little to do with students, as I said earlier, and a great deal to do with getting back at the teachers, in many respects.

You think about it: We give our children to teachers for five hours every day. You want the very best—absolutely—and you need to engage them. Would you give your child to somebody you didn't feel cared, or didn't want to teach them properly, or couldn't engage them or didn't listen to their challenges, or who said, "Well, it's either my way or the highway. I don't care how you learn. I only teach one way"? Of course not.

What's really important is that you have to provide all of the tools for those teachers to be able to teach the different kinds of students that we have in our classrooms today. That isn't rocket science; it really isn't. It's just sitting down with folks, determining where you want to go, engaging them in the process—yes, putting a little money behind it, but making sure that it happens and always remembering to keep that student at the very focus of what it's all about.

Years ago, there was a report called the Jackson report. In essence, it said the education system exists—and it does—but it exists because there are students at the very centre of it. Take away the students and you don't have an education system. You can have teachers galore, but you need those students. So the students must always be the focus of everything you do.

We always used to say, if it isn't in the best interests of students, don't do it. As a good teacher, you intuitively know what's good for students. A good teacher doesn't mind being assessed, not at all. A good teacher looks for professional development, and yes, there are people where we need to encourage more professional development, but again, there are many ways to approach that without being hurtful or spiteful. There are many ways to improve somebody's teaching. There are good, bad and ugly in all kinds of professions—it's not restricted—but the vast majority of the people I've met in the teaching profession are phenomenal individuals who are there for the right reasons.

So as you move forward, for me, it's how you engage them and how you make them a part of the process, as opposed to part of the problem. How do you say, "We value our children so much that we give you our children for so many hours a day and, therefore, we value and respect you as well"? That's the other part that has been missing for some time. I think when you look back, of all

the things that all of us take some responsibility for, it's the disrespect of the profession.

You think about some of the things that happen in schools today. It's not the same world it was. It's not filled with Suzie Sunshines. Our children are very challenged. They have a lot of difficulties in their lives, and yet those teachers are there, caring, teaching, doing the very best they can, and sometimes under some extreme circumstances; and yet, every day they come.

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I think it's our responsibility to constantly provide that moral support for them. That doesn't negate the fact that they're still professionals; that they still must themselves learn, and they still must have a standard that's very high. We expect that of our children; of course we expect that of the teachers themselves. Children will rise to that standard if the teacher has it. In order for the teacher to feel valued, for the teacher to be able to give out to that standard, then they must be respected for their profession and respected because we believe enough in them to give them our children, as I said, for five hours every day.

I can remember when children would be standing outside of the door at 7 o'clock in the morning waiting to get in because they were latchkey kids. They were waiting at the one place that was safe for them, and that was the school. Think about it. They felt safe there because they felt nurtured inside that school and cared for. The people who were there often were the ones who put their hand in their pocket and bought the muffins and bought the juice and came back with the mittens when the kids didn't have the mittens or the boots. Those are the people we need think about when we think about how we engage them in a professional learning program. It can't be punitive; nothing works when it's punitive. It has to be a part of what they themselves see moving forward in terms of professional development. I think we can do it. If you work together, it's amazing what you can do. You park your baggage at the door, you sit down and you really say what it is we want to achieve and how we want to get there, always keeping the students in mind. So I'm pleased.

The issue of time allocation is simply because it shouldn't be here in the first place. I think somebody earlier said that. It really didn't deserve to be here because I think its intent was not to promote how students learn, but rather to put a bit of a curse on the teachers themselves. I think that was wrong. I'm pleased this is moving forward, and I look forward to the vote.

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I'm pleased to join this debate today on the time allocation motion dealing with Bill 82. I listened quite closely to the member for Etobicoke Centre, and I appreciate her comments. She's clearly given a lot of time to this issue.

For me, this has never been about a battle with the teachers. I would concede that perhaps there were some problems between the previous government and the teachers' unions, because obviously the teachers' unions didn't like what they were doing. As far as the issue of

teacher testing, she touched upon things that are very important and the fact that we do trust our children to these professionals for a big part of their lives. I think it is important that those people are the best they can be. How we get there, I suppose we could debate that issue for some time, but I do agree that some of the most important people in children's lives—certainly in my children's lives—are the teachers they've had. We have had some fantastic ones, but I must also say that we have had some who have been not so good. But the ones who have been really good have been unbelievable, and the effect they've had on my children has been remarkable. I do appreciate that. My brother Martin is a teacher as well. I've been approached by people on many occasions who have said that Martin changed their lives. So I appreciate the effect that he has had on people as well. My mother was a teacher by profession, so I do have a little background there.

I don't have a lot of time, and I want to share some of this time with my colleague from Erie-Lincoln. I want to talk about some of the other problems in the education ministry that are not being addressed. In my riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, transportation funding is a huge problem. I met with members of the transportation committee of the board and members of the school bus operators on Friday evening this past week, on December 10. I'll tell you, they've got a mess and I think it is so important that the Minister of Education sit down and come up—I know they sent out a draft funding formula that they've now made changes to and it's just not going to work. They have got to respect the needs of rural people in coming up with these funding formulas.

Our bus operators are the lowest-paid in the province. Our fleet is the oldest, because the operators can't afford to buy new vehicles. They don't get paid enough. There really has to be some work done to address the funding problem when it comes to rural transportation. Now they're talking about cutting 84 buses next year. We're going to have little kids who are going to be asleep when they get to school because they've had to leave home so early. They're going to be asleep on the bus when they come home because they've been on it so long after they've left school. I don't know if that's the best way to be sending our kids to school. If they're that long on the school bus, maybe they're not in the best condition to be learning when they get there. If we cut all of these routes, that's exactly what we're going to be doing. We're going to be having children on the bus far too long for their own educational benefit.

I really want to see the minister take a good, hard look. I sent him a letter today. I hope he's prepared to meet with me and members of the board and the school bus operators at the earliest possible time, because this is something that needs to be discussed, and needs to be discussed right away.

I am going to end my portion of the debate now, because I know my friend from Erie-Lincoln wants to finish this off. I will be voting against the motion because time allocation is something that this government was totally against and now, all of a sudden, they embrace it.

Mr Brownell: I rise this afternoon to participate in this debate on the Professional Learning Program Cancellation Act.

I would like to honour my daughter with a few words that I have to say this afternoon for, as of this Friday, she will be a full-fledged teacher, with all the responsibilities and privileges of teaching in Ontario.

Applause.

Mr Brownell: Yes, I am indeed proud of Alison. She has worked hard. She thought her first love was nursing, but having seen her father spend 32 and a half years in the classroom, decided that that's really—and with the encouragement of her family and her husband. She's quite excited about that.

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): And her grandmother likes that too.

Mr Brownell: Her grandmother, who will be watching right now, will be absolutely excited for me to recognize her here in the House.

Interjection.

Mr Brownell: That's right. She was here last Thursday and certainly enjoyed her afternoon in the House.

I want to speak about this in the context of what teachers are saying. Teachers in Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, in the Upper Canada District School Board, are constantly saying to me, "What has become of or where is this Professional Learning Program Cancellation Act deal?" So I told them. Yesterday, I had breakfast at the Water's Edge Diner at Long Sioux and I met a teacher there. In fact, he was the teacher who took over from me in my classroom in 2000. I was so delighted to hand over a classroom to a young teacher who was excited about teaching but who, after getting into the profession, saw this rule that was put in where he had to take learning programs. He had worked his darnedest at university and at teachers' college to learn, get tested and become the teacher he wanted to be. He did that, but he felt he should have the responsibility of going out there and learning and not having it forced.

I say the same thing. I spent 20 years in university. After that, I spent two summers at Queen's University taking a principal's course. Nobody forced me; I did it on my own. I took those masters degree programs in education because I felt they would help me, but I also wanted to get a degree. Those are the programs that teachers have been doing all along. I've seen that. When I started teaching in 1969, I saw teachers who encouraged me to go out and take those professional programs. That's called mentoring—those teachers who did that. I had some wonderful mentors in my early career.

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Just this past month I went to the funeral of a teacher colleague who had passed away, and I remember going up to talk to her son. I taught grade 8; she taught kindergarten. I probably learned more about the profession through a mentoring process from Joan Mack than, I believe, I learned from any other teacher. I told her son that. Joan Mack didn't need those demands from a government saying, "You have to go out and take those courses." She went out and took the courses on her own.

She encouraged others to do so. In fact, she encouraged me to do what I did in teaching. It was a great feeling, from my heart, to talk to her son about what that mentoring process was all about.

That's what my colleague from Don Valley West talked about, the mentoring that goes on in schools. We don't have to have courses driven by a government program to force on teachers, who are already overloaded with new curriculum, who are overloaded with all the responsibilities of doctoring, nursing and everything else in schools, who are overloaded with trying to put a library in their classroom when a library had to be taken out; teachers who are trying to teach design and technology in the classroom where these full-fledged design and tech shops were taken out.

These are the teachers who don't need another assault on them with professional learning programs. They need to be encouraged; they need to be mentored. They need to be encouraged by those who represent them here at Queen's Park by saying, "Go for the gold." If we want them to hold our children, our students, on a pedestal, we have to hold our teachers on a pedestal. What happened in the past—and I was there. I was there during the Tory regime. I was there when the Ernie Eves cuts to education investment forced 25 school boards to cancel junior kindergarten, 23 boards to reduce special education programs, 44 boards to reduce transportation services and 42 boards to cut custodial maintenance budgets. I was there when the Ernie Eves government cut more than \$1 billion from education in the first two years, including \$145 million in cuts from junior kindergarten. I look at classroom spending: \$163 million in cuts. I was there.

Mr Leal: That's why they sent you to Queen's Park: to turn it around.

Mr Brownell: You're right, member for Peterborough. Exactly. I retired in December 2000, the same time that my daughter is coming on. I'm hoping that the same opportunities open up for her, that there will be this opportunity. When I saw that young fellow, a graduate of Lakehead University, come back to mentor in my classroom in the fall—he had spent April of 2000 in my classroom to practise teaching. When I saw in the fall that he needed—and he should have—a full-time job, and that I could get out, I said, "Here's an opportunity."

The assaults there were on those teachers in the past have to stop, and I know that we have an education minister who has said that those assaults will stop. We've already done something about it. It wasn't that long ago that I opened up the Glengarry News, that great newspaper published in Alexandria, in my good friend Jean-Marc Lalonde's riding of Glengarry-Prescott-Russell. The principal of Williamstown Public School talked about the pupil-teacher ratios in the primary grades. Do you want to know? They're on track there. We talked about having reduced class sizes in the primary grades. It's happening. I see it in my community, in my riding. My teachers are talking about it and my principals are talking about it. I saw it in the headlines in the news-

paper. In fact, I cut it out and I have it in a scrapbook at home.

These are the things that we will do, and we will continue to do, to put teachers on a pedestal so that, in turn, teachers can go into the classrooms and put those children on pedestals. I had 32 and a half years of doing that with kids, 32 and a half years of absolute joy. I look at my daughter and I encourage her to go out there and have absolute joy in a classroom. But with the assaults that were there in the past on educators—and it wasn't pleasant—it was discouraging for teachers. It was discouraging for some of the old-timers. And I was an old-timer; I was towards the end of my career. It was very difficult, but I kept encouraging those young teachers who came on staff. I continued to encourage them and to say to them, "There is hope. There is light at the end of the tunnel. There is a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow."

I say to those who are watching and to those from my riding, I am here speaking because you sent me here. You said, "As a teacher, you have something to contribute here in the House," and I'm glad I'm able to speak on this.

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to rise—well, I'm not really pleased to rise to speak.

Interjection: You're never pleased.

Mr Hudak: I usually am, but you keep throwing these time allocation motions at us. For the third consecutive time I've risen in the House it's a time allocation motion all over again. It's been the last week plus: time allocation motion after time allocation motion after time allocation motion.

I say to the Minister of Transportation, I'd expect you guys to follow—at one point, I'd expect you to follow your promises, to do, once elected, what you promised before you were elected, but I no longer have that expectation. I think it's probably the opposite.

I remember when in cabinet we had a red tape test to ensure that red tape was reduced to the minimum possible in every initiative coming through cabinet. I think now they have the same check box that says, "How can we break this promise?" and you can't get something passed through cabinet unless it breaks at least one Dalton McGuinty or Liberal promise.

I find it interesting too that the Liberals are ramming through this particular time allocation motion to do with teacher testing. If there was a time allocation motion, you'd think it would underlie some type of urgency, but as far as I know, there is no replacement system the Minister of Education has come up with for teacher testing. In fact, I think there are a number of initiatives here that will bear further scrutiny by this Legislature.

First of all, the Liberals are watering down considerably the standards in the classroom. The literacy test has been reduced and is lowering standards that a student would need to pass to graduate from high school; eliminating teacher testing in the province of Ontario; and then, I read this weekend, eliminating the introductory test to see if a teacher who graduates from teachers' college is qualified to do the job or not.

Then, of course, the Minister of Education's promise to turn the College of Teachers, which is supposed to be there as a regulatory and disciplinary body over individual teachers to make sure there are high standards in the classroom—regrettably, the minister is turning that over to the control of the unions. So you would have your OTF umbrella and the groups underneath it and then you have the College of Teachers with the majority of members being in the union. I have no doubt that this is payback. The teachers' unions had funded considerably the Liberal campaigns. In fact, the very nasty advertisements that were used, the very negative advertisements in support of the Liberal campaign, were funded largely by the teachers. I think a lot of this is simply payback to their friends during the election campaign.

The Deputy Speaker: The time for debate has expired. Mr Duncan has moved government notice of motion 294. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

1750

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to move a motion respecting the consideration of concurrences and the Supply Act.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Is there consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Duncan: I move that, notwithstanding any standing order, government orders 10 through 21, inclusive, and order G160, second reading of Bill 160, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005, may be called concurrently; and

That when such orders are called, there shall be one hour allotted for concurrent consideration in a single debate of all of these orders, which time shall be divided equally among the recognized parties; and

That at the conclusion of the debate the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the order for concurrence in supply for each of the ministries named in government orders 10 through 21, inclusive, and to dispose of all remaining stages of Bill 60.

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

CONCURRENCE IN SUPPLY

SUPPLY ACT, 2004

LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2004

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Speaker, I move concurrence in supply for the following ministries:

Ministry of Finance
 Ministry of Health and Long-term Care
 Ministry of Energy
 Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
 Ministry of Children and Youth Services
 Ministry of Education
 Ministry of Transportation
 Ministry of Agriculture and Food
 Ministry of the Environment
 Ministry of Community and Social Services
 Ministry of Economic Development and Trade
 Ministry of Northern Development and Mines.

I move second reading of Bill 160, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Debate? Minister of Finance.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): Thank you, Mr Speaker. Just to spend a very few moments on supply, as you know, sir, and as my friends over on the other side know, this is the bill that gives the members of this Parliament—they authorize the expenditures that really finance the government for the whole year, so it is a kind of momentous occasion when we vote supply.

This evening, however, given the fact that the House leader has done such a magnificent job in organizing the business of this Legislature—and I have to say that the difference with the way in which this place ran for the eight years under the previous administration is night and day. This applies to the supply bill as well. So given that the House leader, my friend the Minister of Energy, the member from Windsor-St Clair, is looking to have a lot of the business of this House wrapped up this evening, I would like to use this minute to express my appreciation to the estimates committee, which has done work examining a variety of expenditures from a variety of ministers, and as well to the people in the Ministry of Finance, Management Board and the financial administration of each ministry.

Putting together the province's budget is not an easy exercise. Although we have our differences politically, in a sense we're all involved in this together. The supply bill gives us an opportunity, collectively, to say, "We've done our homework. We've reviewed the expenditures. The policies of the government are reflected in those expenditures." And it gives us all an opportunity to put our own imprimatur and vote on that. As Minister of Finance, it's a kind of completion of an exercise that really takes us through the entire financial year.

In conclusion, might I just say that I am particularly proud of a number of things this supply motion does. The new investments it makes in health care: We've had lots of debate in this House during question period and during debate on other issues, but the new investments in health care are extremely important. The significant investment in education, beginning a transformation of our education system right from JK to grade 12, is what this supply bill really funds.

Finally, there are a few other things in the budget, and therefore in this supply motion, that give me particular satisfaction. I think of what we were able to do in the budget for seniors on fixed incomes, many of whom said, "We support you, but you have to realize that it's becoming very difficult to keep our homes with the rising costs of such and such." In the budget, we were able to give a seniors' tax credit of \$125, a 25% increase in that credit. That's \$125 in the hands of seniors of modest income to help with the burden of property taxes and the maintenance of homes.

The other thing that I think was very important is the fact that we initiated major changes in the way we do business in this Legislature dealing with financial acts. I think of the Audit Act that we've now passed, which gives us an Auditor General and dramatically changes the powers of the auditor so that he or she can investigate all the agencies that receive taxpayers' money. I think of the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act that we voted on in this House this very day, and I can't believe that the opposition actually voted against this bill.

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): Oh, I can believe it.

Hon Mr Sorbara: My friend the Minister of Municipal Affairs says he can believe it. Perhaps, given the voting record, that is the case. The fact that we passed that bill today and that we will change forever the way we monitor our expenditures and the way we report our expenditures is just one other element of the budget, of the estimates process and of supply that should be noted.

I just want to thank all the members of the Legislature for participating in the debate on the province's expenditures, and I expect that we will be voting, I hope unanimously, for this supply bill.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to rise this evening and talk about the concurrence motions. I would like to support some of the motions that were put through; there's no question about that. But I'm afraid that what's really been bothersome, from our caucus's position, is the fact that so many of these pieces of legislation have been rammed through using time allocation in the last five or six weeks.

What it really boils down to is that time allocation has been used in this House for the last decade or so, and there's no question that other governments have used that. But this government, the Dalton McGuinty government, promised not to use any more time allocation. That was part of their mandate and part of what they talked about: It would never happen. Of course, we're now seeing it on a regular basis, and I fully expect that we will see time allocation for the next five sessions until 2007.

Bill 106 and Bill 149—unbelievable. You did two budget bills on the same day, and third reading for one hour between the two of them. It's pretty sad. And the Minister of Finance stands over there today and brags about how pleased he is with the way this House has performed. I think, yes, when you start doing two budget bills and time-allocating in the same afternoon, when

there were a lot of speakers in the opposition who still wanted—we only had a few speakers speak to those two bills. We didn't ring any bells or anything like that. There was a lot of debate on that. A lot of our caucus members wanted to speak to those two particular pieces of legislation. That was extremely disappointing to us.

1800

The fact is that we believe in fiscal responsibility, and these two bills certainly dealt the province of Ontario a huge blow. I think of things like the removal—

Interjection.

Mr Dunlop: I didn't heckle you, Mr Finance Minister, but you're going to heckle me. That's fine; you go ahead.

To the Minister of Finance: I cannot believe you removed the tax credit for the new home ownership program. That was a program that you know worked well and that we know worked well, and now it's gone. For all these young people who want to buy their first home, that'll now be gone to them. That \$2,500 a year, or whatever that amount of money was, is now removed. That would have bought them washers and dryers and furniture, or maybe deposits on certain things, yet it's now gone. We know and the Minister of Finance knows that we are now seeing projections that there will be a decline in the number of homes built in the province, at a time when we probably need that. That's one thing that really bothered me about the legislation.

On a positive note, though, I support the apprenticeship tax credit. I'm a very strong supporter of that because I come from a construction background in business. I talked to former Premier Eves and Elizabeth Witmer about that during our leadership. We put it in as part of our platform, as well. So the apprenticeship tax credit is something that I'm in favour of.

I just want to say something else positive, because I know that we're in the spirit of Christmas. I do want to thank the Minister of Children and Youth Services, who came up to the riding of Simcoe North today. I want to put this on the record. She announced the children's treatment centre for York region and the county of Simcoe. It's a win-win story for everybody.

Minister, I'm directing my comments to you right now: I'm saying, on a very positive note, how pleased I was that that announcement was made today. The county of Simcoe and York region was the only area left in the province without children's treatment services. We have a great team of people working in both York region and Simcoe county who tried to address the needs of the children who require these services in that region and county of the province. I think what's important is that this particular proposal is not a bricks-and-mortar proposal; it's a proposal that includes about 10 locations, and it includes the funding.

On behalf of the children, the families and the people who put the proposal together, I want to thank the Minister of Children and Youth Services for coming to Simcoe North today and making that announcement. It was a win-win story for myself and for the minister and,

of course, the greatest winners were the families and the children who required those services.

I do think that every once in a while we do have to say something positive. On a separate note, though, with Simcoe county, I have to direct my comments for just a few moments to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. He's in the House today. I'm very concerned about the greenbelt legislation. I do understand that we have some committee hearings set up; we're planning on committee hearings for this winter. We're very concerned about this in Simcoe county because of the leapfrogging effect.

Tomorrow afternoon I'll be attending the swearing in of the warden of Simcoe county. I believe it's getting to be 164 or 165 years that there has been a warden elected in Simcoe county. I know that the whole idea of the leapfrogging of development will be a huge issue for the local municipalities in the county of Simcoe, because now we're going to be faced with what we expect to be an increase in the number of applications for development. We're concerned about the infrastructure costs, and that deals with everything from the children's treatment centres to the fact that we need additional MRIs to the fact that there will be increased capacity required in the sewage treatment plants and the quality of the sewage treatment plants. The one thing we want to do is maintain the quality of life and improve upon the quality of water in our lakes and rivers in the county of Simcoe.

So I think it's important, although the minister tried to push the greenbelt legislation through using time allocation—in fact, one vote actually had to be reversed—that we are proceeding with committee hearings this winter. I really hope we'll be able at the public hearings to come up with some really positive notes from the areas that will be affected by the leapfrogging effect of the removal of the greenbelt area from the GTA.

I've only got another couple of minutes to speak, and then I'm going to turn it over to my colleague the member from Erie-Lincoln, who will wrap up our 20 minutes. As we leave this session of Parliament, it's important to note that the Dalton McGuinty government has proceeded through its first three sessions breaking a lot of promises to the citizens of Ontario. We hear that on a daily basis. In fact, it's amazing to watch the number of people who come forward at community events now. You know they probably voted Liberal, and now they're saying, "I wonder when the next election is, because we don't want to see this guy in power for the next three years."

Ms Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): You don't have to wonder. It's October 2007. We're making it really simple.

Mr Dunlop: I'm getting a lot of heckling from the opposite side and I'm losing my concentration. I think it's the member—she's not in her chair—from Stoney Creek. One of the amazing things around here is how, by the time the session's over, the whole Parliament's over, you finally know where everybody's from. So I pity you

in your chair, Mr Speaker, trying to carry on learning where all the seats are actually from.

That's our concern from this side of House: the number of broken promises made by this government. I want to hold my critic's position. I'm the critic for community safety and correctional services, and I've got some real issues with the Minister of Community Safety on a lot of things that he's brought forward that we've seen no debate on in this House. We've seen the 1,000-police-officers promise to the citizens of Ontario and to police forces. We're not actually seeing that come forward at all. We're seeing some kind of action plan in place, promises made to come forward with a resolution of the double-hatter issue. The minister promised mediation and then legislation. We haven't seen that yet. The list goes on and on and on. I'll be putting out a press release in the next few days showing the status of what the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services has actually accomplished, which is not really a lot of anything in this first term.

So with that, I thank you for the opportunity to speak to concurrences, and I'll be sitting down now. I guess the member for Erie-Lincoln will be joining the debate in the next rotation.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I hope everybody in Leamington has a really Merry Christmas this year.

Tonight we're just wrapping up our comments on the Supply Act, 2004. As you know, it provides legislative authority for the spending from the estimates and supplementary estimates, which have been put before the House. Without this spending authority, the government would be unable to make most scheduled and unscheduled payments.

For instance, our nursing homes cannot be paid, our hospitals cannot be paid, doctors cannot be paid, municipalities cannot pay their employees, social assistance recipients cannot receive their funding, children's aid societies cannot be paid, our provincial police cannot be paid, and all of these other accounts that make up the government. So it's a pretty basic piece of legislation. It's been done, going back for hundreds of years, that government has to bring forth a supply motion, and we're here tonight to basically put that on the record.

1810

As you know, generally speaking, as the government pays its bills, pays its employees, Ontario is strong, thankfully. Ontario's had a very balanced economic program, which I think once in a while should be looked at as the envy of Canada. We have people moving here, they want to settle here, they want to bring their families here and they're more interested in coming to Ontario than ever before. That's one of the reasons, perhaps, as we think of the supply motion, we have to remind ourselves that maybe some of the problems we have in dealing with the greenbelt, or with all of our funding issues, deal with the fact that we are a magnet for the rest of the world, and we should be thankful for that and look

upon that as a gift we're getting—the great resources that we have in this wonderful province.

As we continue to grow this province, we have to look at the fact that we are adding spaces for our colleges and universities. We have frozen tuitions. We've got the new apprenticeship program in place, which means jobs for our young people, with 7,000 new apprenticeship spaces available. We've committed \$300 million in the next four years for equipment and other research infrastructure. We're now increasing the funding for public education by \$854 million. We've also hired an extra 1,300 teachers. So there are good things happening.

Certainly, in this House, it's the duty of the opposition to raise some of the challenges; that's their job. But I think as Ontarians, coming close to the end of the year and Christmas, we should reflect upon the fact that there is no other place in the world that we'd rather live than Ontario and Canada.

Let's ensure that everyone has a healthy, prosperous and merry Christmas and a wonderful 2005, especially those wonderful people down there in the tomato capital of the world, Leamington.

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I find myself—is this another time allocation motion, more or less?

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: No? It's just a habit. It seems like, in the last couple of days, every time I get up in the House it's a time allocation motion, another Liberal bill rammed through this Legislature as we head into the Christmas season.

Hon Mr Sorbara: Get over it.

Mr Hudak: Well, it's hard to get over. Let me tell you one thing that the farmers in Niagara are having trouble getting over, and that's the way the Liberals tried to ram through Bill 135, the greenbelt legislation, which is going to affect, fundamentally and permanently, farmers throughout the greenbelt area. They tried to ram it through this Legislature. All public input had to be in by December 12.

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: The minister who is heckling me at this point—it's good to see that he's here as I make this discussion. They wanted the information in by December 12 and wanted the bill to be rammed through the House by December 15, I think the minister said, so limiting to three days of consideration hundreds of submissions from across the province.

Mr Colle: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I think the orders have two other pieces of legislation.

The Deputy Speaker: I'll see to that. Mr Hudak?

Mr Hudak: In fact, I think the Ministry of Municipal Affairs is one of the items that was listed off in the motion, so I am sticking to the issue. You're asking for funds to be allocated to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, and a lot of that funding would have been used for Ministry of Municipal Affairs staff to ram that bill through the Legislature. They would have been here jamming that bill through the Legislature in three days, which left very little—actually, no time.

I know my House leader, Mr Baird, is going to be upset with me commenting on Bill 135, but I wanted to give the member credit too, because that was the first time that I can remember in my time in the House where we forced the government to withdraw a time allocation motion. Well, that wasn't done alone. A lot of credit goes to Mr Baird and my colleagues, but also because of substantial support for that from municipalities across the province and farm groups like the OFA and OFA affiliates, the regional groups throughout the greenbelt area, particularly the region of Niagara, as well as the town of Lincoln; and I think my friends from Clarington, Scugog and other municipalities—Brock township, Durham region, Wellington county, the township of Erin, among others. There was a broad base of not only the municipalities' farm groups but also conservation authorities that called for that, and I'm very pleased that now we will have some committee hearings in the new year. I know my colleague Mr Baird will be happy that I brought this up. It is something very important to my constituents, who now have more time to make sure that bill is properly addressed.

I do worry. I worry about this particular motion on the floor passing, because I don't know to what degree we can trust the government to spend that money wisely. I know the finance minister is here and I know, I think since our last full year's budget, that spending is up some 18% under a year and a half of the Liberal regime.

Hon Mr Sorbara: Get your numbers right.

Mr Hudak: I looked at the numbers closely. I think it's some 18% since the Liberals have come into office—a considerable increase in spending, part of that fuelled by probably the biggest tax hike in the history of the province, which hits working families—working families in Erie-Lincoln—up to potentially \$1,000 per family. That is a massive and punishing tax hike, particularly when Dalton McGuinty stared into those TV screens across the province and said he would not raise my taxes, the taxes of the voters.

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): Is there anything left that he can't tax?

Mr Hudak: I think if it lives, if it breathes, if it moves, if it thinks, he's going to tax it or regulate it, one or the other. I said earlier on, during members' statements, that nobody—we had a little fun with it—no-o-o-o-body—breaks promises like Dalton McGuinty.

Hon Mr Sorbara: That was so tacky.

Mr Hudak: But it got the Minister of Finance's attention. I think, when I listened to his remarks, he did mention once the 40 or so broken promises that have already happened. I've mentioned the tax hike, the minister's own responsibilities—auto insurance certainly has not come down the 10% to 20% that my Liberal opponent was promising during the last campaign. Those are just two key broken promises from the opposition. That gives me great pause to think that if we allow this to pass, can we actually trust the government to spend the money wisely?

The Minister of Transportation: I think there was a very interesting report brought forward by Christina Blizzard in the Toronto Sun about spending taxpayers' dollars in a public relations campaign, in Spain and in Spanish. In fact, the documents were sent around, according to the articles and the e-mails that we did receive, by Edelman, a public relations firm on contract with the Ministry of Transportation. While the minister's staff member, his communications assistant, denies that the ministry has anything to do with those documents, nor does Edelman, I don't believe it. I just think there are far too many links to Edelman, in fact, that an employee in Spain sent around the e-mails that had a document that was created by an Edelman employee in Toronto. I think that minister's office's fingerprints are all over this, which is regrettable. How can I be asked to vote for this when the Minister of Transportation is using taxpayer dollars to fight a public relations campaign in Spain? I think it's vindictive.

Mr Colle: Look at him defending the Spanish consortium. You've got a nerve to do that. What about the people of Ontario he ripped off? Jeez.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Hudak: The member is shedding some puppy dog tears across the way.

Mr Colle: How can you do that in this Legislature?

Mr Hudak: I ask him too—he pretends to be a beacon of integrity—how I can vote for this when you're spending taxpayer dollars in Spain to make a public relations battle with this group when they were doing their own IPO?

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: The member is right; there's a great vindictiveness about this government. If there is a group that stands up to them, you go out on the all-out attack, there's no doubt about it, and one of the attack dogs here is hoping he'll get into cabinet some day.

The Deputy Speaker: I just remind the members that the debate is carried through the Chair, not directly across the floor.

Member for Erie-Lincoln.

1820

Mr Hudak: But it's true, and it's certainly not in the spirit of the Christmas season to see that kind of vindictive attack, using taxpayer dollars by the Ministry of Transportation against somebody they deal with; and, as part of that, the attack on the Ontario Medical Association, using taxpayer—

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: You did. You used taxpayer dollars to commission a poll—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Eglinton-Lawrence.

Mr Hudak: —to basically try to characterize doctors as being money-grubbers. You did. It's there. It's in the record, right?

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: You did.

The member refuses to admit it, Mr Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Look, you two: Member from Eglinton-Lawrence, tone it down; member from Erie-Lincoln, please continue.

Mr Hudak: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I appreciate it.

There's no doubt, using taxpayer dollars to attack doctors in Ontario whom you characterized as being money-hungry. You were sort of blaming the old doctors—that's how they characterized it.

I do find it regrettable that the government is using taxpayer dollars to make these types of attacks against groups that stand up to them. It's a highly regrettable habit of this government. The Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association stood up to this government on the ill-conceived, poorly thought out so-called fat tax. Remember your first big tax grab, that fat tax, that we in the opposition stood up against, and the Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association fought against? I think some of the things you have done with the tax hikes and the other campaigns are part of a vindictive attack against that group as well.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: I know it's past 6 of the clock and we are getting hungry, and that may be the reason, but I'd like to hear these debates.

Now I'd like to hear from the member from Timmins-James Bay.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): It is with such—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Bisson: They're really agitated here tonight. I can't believe it.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Maybe the member from Eglinton-Lawrence didn't hear me.

Mr Bisson: I'll try it again.

It's with a warm heart that I stand here today on concurrence in supply. The Minister of Finance wants to vote on all of these supply motions so that he can pay the staff wages for all of these ministries and make sure all the programs get their money so that they can all go home with their Christmas cheques and all those little children out there, the little boys and girls, are able to get cheques from their parents so they can enjoy Christmas. I just want to say that I don't want to stand in the way of children and Christmas; I want to see this debate ended. Let's pay out the paycheques.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? There being none, Mr Duncan has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Finance. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: I'm sorry. I'm sorry; I didn't look to the right; I should have. That vote will be stacked.

Mr Duncan has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, including supplementaries. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Mr Duncan has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Energy. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Mr Duncan has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Mr Duncan has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Mr Duncan has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Education. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Mr Duncan has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Transportation. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Mr Duncan has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Agriculture and Food. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Mr Duncan has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of the Environment. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Mr Duncan has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Community and Social Services. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Mr Duncan has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Mr Duncan has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

There is a vote.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1827 to 1837.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Duncan has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Finance. All those in favour, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Phillips, Gerry
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Leal, Jeff	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bountrogianni, Marie	Levac, Dave	Racco, Mario G.
Brown, Michael A.	Marsales, Judy	Ramal, Khalil
Brownell, Jim	Matthews, Deborah	Rinaldi, Lou
Colle, Mike	Mauro, Bill	Ruprecht, Tony
Craitor, Kim	McMeekin, Ted	Sandals, Liz
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Sergio, Mario
Di Cocco, Caroline	Meilleur, Madeleine	Smith, Monique
Duguid, Brad	Milloy, John	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Duncan, Dwight	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Van Bommel, Maria
Gerretsen, John	Oraziotti, David	Wilkinson, John
Gravelle, Michael	Patten, Richard	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Hoy, Pat	Peters, Steve	
Jeffrey, Linda	Peterson, Tim	

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Dunlop, Garfield	Hudak, Tim
Barrett, Toby	Hardeman, Ernie	Yakubuski, John
Bisson, Gilles	Horwath, Andrea	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 43; the nays are 8.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr Duncan has moved second reading of Bill 160, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

SUPPLY ACT, 2004

LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2004

Mr Sorbara moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill 160, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005 / Projet de loi 160, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2005.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

This House will now stand adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 1841.

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