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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 27 April 2005

Mercredi 27 avril 2005

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

Wednesday 27 April 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 27 avril 2005

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

COMMUNITY PROJECTS IN
NORTH BAY

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): I rise today to tell members of this House of the banner month that the residents of Nipissing have had. The month of April has been unprecedented.

Two weeks ago, on what one North Bay nurse has referred to as that "wonderful Thursday," we saw the long-awaited announcement of a \$218-million construction project which will bring at least 400 construction jobs to our riding—a huge addition to our region that will be an essential infrastructure component. This is an enormous initiative and it was a banner day.

The very next day, North Bay was privileged to be one of the 55 communities across the province chosen to develop a cutting-edge initiative to attract health care professionals to our riding.

Last Wednesday, our community was chosen as one of six pilot project sites for the JobsNow program, which will assist in a real and tangible way those who have been receiving welfare for more than 12 months.

On Friday, the Minister of Natural Resources announced support for our conservation authority, and \$330,000 for source water protection.

And just this last Monday, Minister Gerretsen visited North Bay, together with federal Minister Comuzzi, to bring more good news to our community. My federal counterpart, Anthony Rota, and I announced that the city was receiving \$15 million from each of the federal and provincial levels of government for our water filtration plant. Together with the \$4 million our government already committed to this project through the northern Ontario heritage fund, the province's investment is nearly \$20 million for this very important \$45-million project that will commence construction this fall.

The McGuinty government is building strong communities. North Bay is proud to be one of those communities, and I am proud to support the good people of North Bay.

TOBACCO GROWERS

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): Tobacco Farmers in Crisis have a plan that includes both

short-term and long-term assistance to tobacco-growing families and their communities. This plan, in my view, is much more fair and dignified than those that have been offered up by both this government and the federal government.

Why can't the members opposite see that preserving a tobacco program that controls supply, maintains minimum prices, places production permits in the hands of growers and includes health and safety protection would be in the best interests of both farmers and the general public?

Tobacco farmers, as we know, produce a legal product. They grow tobacco to supply the market, not to encourage smoking amongst adults. They are guided by strict government regulations. When this government puts Ontario's farmers out of business, who will regulate offshore tobacco? What will be the content of Canadian cigarettes? I ask the members opposite, do you realize that offshore tobacco would create a significant public health consequence for people in this province?

If the members opposite would take the time to listen to tobacco farmers, you might realize that this government does not have all the answers. These folks do share many of your goals. It's time for government to listen, to continue to listen. I do recognize farmers in the gallery today.

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): On April 14, Greater Sudbury city council considered the impact of the government's municipal partnership fund on our community. The fund replaces the community reinvestment fund, created by the former government when it became clear that the download of ambulances, public transit, social assistance, child care, public housing etc. was not revenue-neutral.

The new grant will be an increase of about \$500,000 over the CRF funding received in 2004. However, the funding is based on a 2002 CRF reconciliation. There is an existing shortfall between the 2002 reconciliation and what was actually budgeted by council in subsequent budgets. So in 2005, the city will actually receive about \$2.7 million less than was budgeted by council. That shortfall, now and in the future, is a cause for major concern.

This government has been silent on the matter of transitional assistance for communities that will face a funding shortfall in the out years from now until 2008. Council noted on April 14, "[T]he city will be facing

2006 grant funding in an amount less than budgeted for 2005. This is a major concern to the city as it will put increased pressure on future municipal levies and tax rates.”

City council passed a resolution calling on the McGuinty government to provide transitional funding for the years 2005-08, to phase in funding shortfalls faced by communities in those years. Our community should not have to bear the ongoing burden of costs for services which were never revenue-neutral. I call on the Minister of Finance to tell municipalities like the city of Greater Sudbury that there will be transitional funding in the out years so that the costs will truly be revenue-neutral.

FAMILY HEALTH TEAMS

Mr. Pat Hoy (Chatham–Kent Essex): The McGuinty government is keeping its promise to improve access to health care in Ontario. I’m pleased that approval of three family health teams for Chatham–Kent Essex has been granted. They are the Tilbury and district family health team action group, the Chatham–Kent family health team and the Leamington and area family health team.

Family health teams are the signature piece of our government’s comprehensive plan to improve health care in Ontario. They are exactly what communities need to both attract and retain doctors. Doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners, physiotherapists, midwives, pharmacists and other health care professionals will work as a team to ensure that the residents of Chatham–Kent Essex receive the very best care, day and night, and closer to home.

There are many individuals to thank across the riding, from Leamington to Chatham. Tilbury in particular has waited for 12 years for this announcement. I would like to thank two very special individuals, Karen Smith and Katie Taylor, co-chairs of the Tilbury and district family health team action group, for their persistence and hard work. They never, ever gave up.

Family health teams are a huge step on the road that is taking Ontario to a better health care system, a system that helps keep people healthier and delivers quality care to them when they need it and that will be there for generations to come.

DAIRY AND POULTRY FARMERS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): It’s my pleasure to rise in the House today to acknowledge and welcome the dairy and chicken farmers of Ontario, known as FarmGate5, who are sitting in the gallery today.

The dairy and poultry boards got together and formed FarmGate5 so they could promote the positive contribution their farms make to the economy of Ontario. Their role is to bring together all people and organizations that believe in a strong agricultural sector and a prosperous food industry in this province.

The famous five of FarmGate5 include the Dairy Farmers of Ontario, the Chicken Farmers of Ontario, the Ontario Egg Producers, the Ontario Turkey Producers’

Marketing Board and the Ontario Broiler Hatching Egg and Chick Commission.

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It is important to note that the dairy and poultry farmers account for one third of the total farm cash receipts in Ontario. There are approximately 7,000 dairy and poultry farmers in this province, and last year they produced over \$2.5 billion worth of goods.

Since its launch in September at the International Plowing Match, over 7,500 Ontarians have signed the FarmGate5 supporter form. Of those who signed, I’m pleased to say that almost 50 MPPs have also signed in support of the FarmGate5 agenda, and I’m proud to say that I’m one of those. By building this grassroots network of support, FarmGate5 has been able to demonstrate that many Ontarians, on and off the farm, rely on and expect a strong dairy and poultry sector.

As MPP for my riding of Oxford, which we all know is the dairy capital of Canada, I would encourage my colleagues to join FarmGate5 for a reception in room 230 at 4 p.m. today. I’d also like to acknowledge the presence of the tobacco farmers in our gallery today. I’d like to thank you for the opportunity to make this statement in the House today.

FIRE IN COBOURG

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): I rise today to inform my colleagues of a massive fire which on Monday, April 25, 2005, engulfed Horizon Plastics, a plastics manufacturing company in the town of Cobourg in my riding. While this fire proved to be an extraordinary test for the people of my riding, not to mention the 300 employees of Horizon Plastics, public and private officials alike handled the situation in a diligent and courageous fashion. Indeed, while Cobourg’s fire captain described the challenge as one of the biggest fires his force has battled in decades, firefighters courageously conquered this inferno.

I’m certain the members of this House will join me as I applaud the tremendous competence and boundless bravery of the more than 100 courageous firefighters who hail from more than 14 fire departments in Northumberland and surrounding communities, such as Peterborough, Oshawa and the Canadian Forces Base in Trenton. Their courageous efforts, accompanied by the Cobourg fire and police services and the local OPP officers, have prevented what could have been a catastrophe.

I would also like to commend Mayor Peter Delanty of Cobourg, as well as the emergency officials, who quickly declared a state of emergency so as to guarantee the safety of the residents of Cobourg. Mayor Delanty and Fire Chief Allen Mann should also be thanked for working with the officials from the Ministry of the Environment to provide community briefings every half hour so that residents could access the most current information.

The House should know that on Tuesday I attended a meeting with municipal and ministry officials, and I’m pleased to announce that, while the Ministry of the

Environment is still monitoring the situation on the ground, the state of emergency has now been lifted.

DAIRY AND POULTRY FARMERS

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton–Kent–Middlesex): I have the pleasure of extending an invitation to all members of this Legislature to a reception this afternoon given by FarmGate5. FarmGate5 brings together people and organizations who believe that supply management is an integral part of a strong agricultural sector. The membership of over 7,000 consists of Ontarians from all walks of life, including farmers, agrifood partners and companies, financial institutions, consumer groups, unions, municipal governments, MPPs and MPs. I am a proud member of FarmGate5, as I know many of my colleagues in this assembly are.

Because of supply management, Ontario consumers are guaranteed a nutritious basket of high-quality dairy and poultry products that are among the least expensive in the world. In turn, their farming friends and neighbours get a stable income and a fair share of food prices. Last year's cash receipts from dairy, chicken, eggs, turkey and hatcheries were approximately \$2.5 billion at the farm gate. They are responsible for a further 60,000 jobs in this province.

Canada is committed to domestic supply management as a solution that works for consumers, food processors and the industry. Canada's position in the current world trade talks negotiations reflects that commitment. To assist the Canadian government in these negotiations, Farmgate5 has been organized in support of Ontario's dairy and poultry farmers. Come to the FarmGate5 reception in room 230 starting at 4 p.m., and take the opportunity to enjoy farm-fresh products, meet farmers and learn more about supply management.

CANADA-ONTARIO MUNICIPAL RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to make a few comments on the COMRIF program, and I'm glad to see that both the ministers responsible for it are here. First of all, I want to say to you how thankful I am that the township of Severn in my riding received \$1 million for that funding.

However, I do want to point out an interesting fact. The county of Simcoe and its member municipalities, if we include the cities of Orillia and Barrie, make up 19 municipalities. They represent about 4.2% of the population in Ontario. In my riding alone, there were nine applications for COMRIF funding for the provincial share, and it would have amounted to \$22 million. I know it's only stage one at this point. However, it's very important that I put on the record for my residents and for the folks in the county of Simcoe and the cities of Barrie and Orillia that this is one of the fastest-growing areas of the province, and that has been compounded by your greenbelt legislation. We need to make sure that these

communities have the proper resources and the sewer and water systems and bridges etc.

Really and truly, although they received a total of \$1.535 billion in the COMRIF announcement the other day, there was probably \$60 million or \$70 million applied for. We need to put on the record that these municipalities will be looking for substantial amounts more in the coming months, in the stage two announcements. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this today.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): We often hear the phrase, "Children are our future." The McGuinty government is committed to them and their future.

That is why we created the Ministry of Children and Youth Services.

That is why we added \$200 million more to children's services in our first budget.

That is why we announced our Best Start plan, which will help Ontario's children to be ready and eager to achieve success in school by the time they start grade 1.

That is why we are investing more in children's mental health services.

That is why we are hiring more therapists to provide IBI to young children with autism and to create new supports for children and youth with autism in the classroom.

That is why we are investing in children's treatment centres like the one in York region. The previous government failed to support the children of York region. Our government is committed to providing them with the services they need.

To end off, I would like to share this quote from Cindy DeCarlo, a parent and organizer of rallies to bring a CTC to York region just before Christmas of last year: "If I could have a fairy-tale ending to all of this, it would be that we had an announcement on Monday. You know what? My wish came true."

Thanks to the McGuinty government, which not only provided what I stated but, in particular, made sure that the region of York got a centre, which it did not have under any of the other political parties.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

COMITÉ PERMANENT DE LA JUSTICE

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

M. Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke–Nord): Monsieur le Président, je demande la permission de déposer un rapport du comité permanent de la justice et je propose son adoption.

I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on justice policy and move its adoption. I offer it

to you through the page Inderraj Singh, of Etobicoke North.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 158, An Act to replace the Theatres Act and to amend other Acts in respect of film / Projet de loi 158, Loi remplaçant la Loi sur les cinémas et modifiant d'autres lois en ce qui concerne les films.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Shall the report be received and adopted?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those against, please say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1349 to 1354.

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

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Duncan, Dwight	Phillips, Gerry
Bartolucci, Rick	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Qaadri, Shafiq
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Fonseca, Peter	Racco, Mario G.
Bountrogianni, Marie	Gerretsen, John	Ramsay, David
Bradley, James J.	Hoy, Pat	Rinaldi, Lou
Broten, Laurel C.	Hudak, Tim	Smith, Monique
Brown, Michael A.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Smitherman, George
Brownell, Jim	Levac, Dave	Takhar, Harinder S.
Bryant, Michael	Marsales, Judy	Tory, John
Cansfield, Donna H.	Mauro, Bill	Van Bommel, Maria
Caplan, David	McMeekin, Ted	Watson, Jim
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	McNeely, Phil	Wilkinson, John
Craiton, Kim	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Crozier, Bruce	Milloy, John	Zimmer, David
Di Cocco, Caroline	Oraziotti, David	
Duguid, Brad	Peters, Steve	

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

Nays

Barrett, Toby	Kormos, Peter	Runciman, Robert W.
Chudleigh, Ted	Marchese, Rosario	Scott, Laurie
Dunlop, Garfield	Martel, Shelley	Sterling, Norman W.
Hampton, Howard	Martiniuk, Gerry	Wilson, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John
Horwath, Andrea	Ouellette, Jerry J.	
Klees, Frank	Prue, Michael	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 46; the nays are 19.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

GOOD GOVERNMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005

SUR LA SAINTE GESTION PUBLIQUE

Mr. Bryant moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 190, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts and by enacting one new Act / Projet de loi 190, Loi visant à promouvoir une saine gestion publique en modifiant ou en abrogeant certaines lois et en édictant une nouvelle loi.

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

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): The bill is a collection of technical and housekeeping amendments to many statutes to keep them up to date and correct errors in translation and language. Seventeen ministries submitted amendments. Each ministry's statutes are in one schedule, with the exception of two ministries which have offered more than one schedule. The commencement provisions for the content of each of the schedules are set out in the schedules.

APPRENTICESHIP AND CERTIFICATION AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'APPRENTISSAGE ET LA RECONNAISSANCE PROFESSIONNELLE

Ms Scott moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 191, An Act to amend the Apprenticeship and Certification Act, 1998 / Projet de loi 191, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'apprentissage et la reconnaissance professionnelle.

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

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): This bill addresses the need for a new apprenticeship program in the province of Ontario. If passed, this bill would be the first step in gaining recognition for a new apprenticeship program in the fuel industry. The use of natural gas and oil touches all of our lives on a daily basis. It is imperative that we support the successful training and apprenticeship of people working in this field.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank my legislative intern, Rebecca Sciarra, in the gallery, for her extensive work on this bill.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I move that pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Wednesday, April 27, 2005, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Mr. Duncan has moved government notice of motion 351. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those against, please say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1400 to 1405.

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

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Peters, Steve
Barrett, Toby	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Bartolucci, Rick	Hardeman, Ernie	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bentley, Christopher	Hoy, Pat	Racco, Mario G.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hudak, Tim	Ramsay, David
Boutrogianni, Marie	Jeffrey, Linda	Rinaldi, Lou
Bradley, James J.	Klees, Frank	Runciman, Robert W.
Brotten, Laurel C.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Scott, Laurie
Brown, Michael A.	Levac, Dave	Smith, Monique
Brownell, Jim	Marsales, Judy	Smitherman, George
Bryant, Michael	Martiniuk, Gerry	Sterling, Norman W.
Cansfield, Donna H.	Mauro, Bill	Takhar, Harinder S.
Caplan, David	McMeekin, Ted	Tory, John
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
Chudleigh, Ted	Meilleur, Madeleine	Watson, Jim
Crozier, Bruce	Milloy, John	Wilkinson, John
Di Cocco, Caroline	Mitchell, Carol	Wilson, Jim
Duguid, Brad	Munro, Julia	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duncan, Dwight	Oraziotti, David	Zimmer, David
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

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

Nays

Hampton, Howard	Kormos, Peter	Martel, Shelley
Horwath, Andrea	Marchese, Rosario	Prue, Michael

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 59; the nays are 6.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, as you know, the McGuinty government is setting the pace as the only jurisdiction in North America that is committed to replacing coal-fired electricity generation. We're doing this because we want to protect the best interests of Ontarians by reducing harmful emissions and cleaning up the air we breathe.

I'm pleased to rise today to advise the House of a significant new study, a study that illustrates the importance of our government's commitment to replacing coal-fired generation in the province. This study confirms that the replacement of Ontario's coal-fired plants will reduce the

health and environmental costs in Ontario. This independent study brings to light the massive hidden costs of coal-fired generation, and when the health and environmental costs are included, it is clear that coal-fired generation is not only the dirtiest option, it's also the most expensive option.

This study indicates a relationship between increased air pollution due to coal-fired electricity generation and up to 668 premature deaths each year in Ontario. It also indicates that 928 hospital admissions, 1,100 emergency room visits and a staggering 333,660 minor illnesses such as headaches and coughing are related to emissions from Ontario's dirty coal-fired plants each year. In addition to health damages, emissions from coal-fired generation also cause environmental damages such as greenhouse gas emissions, which are subject to the Kyoto treaty on climate change. That's a lot of pain and suffering, and it's simply not acceptable. The McGuinty government does not accept it, I don't believe any member of this House will accept it and I'm sure the citizens of Ontario will not accept it.

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Our government came into office with a firm commitment to end the health and environmental damage caused by coal-fired generation. The study compared the financial health and environmental costs of four different scenarios of electricity generation in Ontario. With an annual cost of \$4.4 billion, the study found that coal-fired electricity generation is significantly more expensive than the other options considered. What astounded me was how much our seemingly cheap coal power was really costing the people of this province. There are massive hidden costs in terms of the health and environmental damages caused by coal. This is where the true cost of coal-fired electricity lies.

Let me clarify how this study was done, because I believe members of this House will want to be sure of the due diligence and care that went into it. The study employed well-respected techniques to forecast the change in risks that occur with the change in air quality. This includes the risk of illness and death. I'm sure members understand that it is impossible in a study of this kind to identify which specific deaths at which specific time are attributable to air pollution from any particular source but, at the same time, I think we all understand and accept that air pollution, like that form of emissions from coal-fired generation, does contribute to deaths and illness. And sadly, the impacts of air pollution affect the most vulnerable Ontarians: the elderly, the young and those who are already ill.

The study I'm sharing with you today follows a model many other governments use to estimate health damages associated with air pollution. It was undertaken by a team of experts in emissions modeling and cost-benefit analysis, and utilized a more comprehensive approach. Instead of using a time-series approach, which only accounts for short-term or acute health impacts of air pollution, we chose to employ a cohort analysis approach. This comprehensive approach takes into account the long-term

impact of exposure to air pollution. The Ontario Medical Association is also using this approach to update their vital groundbreaking work in modelling the illness costs of air pollution.

This study examined three options for generating electricity: all gas, refurbished nuclear and new gas generation, and stringent controls. I'm pleased to announce that all of these options have lower health and environmental costs than the status quo. However, even with stringent controls, the true cost of coal would be two and a half times more expensive than the financial costs considered in isolation. So I am here to tell you that the lowest cost scenario for Ontario's electricity future was a combination of refurbished nuclear and gas. Including health and environmental impacts, this option would cost \$1.9 billion annually, which is half of the annual cost of existing coal generation.

The choices are clear. The McGuinty government must stand by its commitment to replace coal in a way that is responsible, protects the best interests of Ontarians by reducing harmful emissions, protects the reliability of our electricity system and cleans up the air we breathe. We're well on our way to meeting that commitment. I'm pleased to again say that Lakeview is being closed tomorrow as scheduled and, shortly thereafter, we'll be announcing our plan to deal with the remaining coal-fired generation plants in Ontario.

The study I bring to your attention today demonstrates our commitment to the coal goal. It illustrates that there are alternatives to coal-fired plants, alternatives that will clear the air and make economic sense. Our time is now, so let's aim for a future we can be proud of. Let's strive to work together and deliver a cleaner, greener Ontario and a quality of life that is second to none. Let's strive for a healthy future, a future we long for on behalf of our children and our grandchildren.

BEEF RESEARCH FACILITY

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food):

Yesterday I had the great pleasure of touring the new beef research facility in Elora, one that is unique to Canada and will bring benefits to Ontario's beef farmers and consumers. The Elora beef research station is a great example of how government, industry leaders and the scientific community have collaborated to create new opportunities for Ontario's beef industry and our economy.

I am proud that the McGuinty government is one of the major funding partners for this project. Our support has helped to create a new 22,000-square-foot research barn that houses more than \$2 million in specialized equipment. This includes a feedlot that can monitor the individual feed intake of nearly 200 cattle and a handling unit for ultrasound, blood-testing and body composition measurements. It's the very first time this combination of equipment has existed in one facility. These tools will assist scientists with their current top research priorities of feed efficiency and beef tenderness.

This type of research, coupled with efforts by the industry to create a long-term recovery strategy, will give

Ontario's beef producers a competitive edge for the future.

The new beef research facility was made possible through several provincial funding channels via the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food, the Ontario Innovation Trust and the Ontario Realty Corp. I want to thank our other funding sponsors, the Canadian Foundation for Innovation and the Ontario Cattlemen's Association, as well as the University of Guelph for helping make this new facility a reality. In particular, I'd like to recognize the investments that have been made by the Ontario Cattlemen's Association. At a time of short-term uncertainty brought on by the BSE crisis, it took great courage and foresight for our beef farmers to find the funding to support long-term research.

Innovative research and development is the best way forward for a strong, prosperous future in Ontario's agri-food industry. The McGuinty government recognizes that education, research and technology transfer are essential to a vibrant, competitive agricultural sector. In addition to the Elora Beef Research Station, we fund 16 other research and technology transfer facilities in the province. Our government has been a strong supporter, both in the development of the new Elora barn and the ongoing research projects it houses. Through its support for the Elora Beef Research Station, our government is providing researchers with the advanced tools and techniques they need for innovative developments in beef production. These innovations will give Ontario beef producers access to better genetics, immunology, animal health and nutrition. Advances in these areas will translate into a stronger beef industry.

Earlier this month, I signed an amendment to the agricultural policy framework which will bring new agricultural research and development funding to Ontario. I'm pleased that we have worked with the federal government to secure more funds for our future livestock research through the wedge-funding component of the APF. By investing in strategic research and development, we are promoting the long-term viability and competitiveness of Ontario's agri-food industry.

I believe Ontario needs to build its reputation by attracting and retaining top-quality research professionals and providing leading-edge programs and technology. Our province is Canada's biggest economic engine and we need to keep that engine well oiled. By creating an unparalleled environment in research and education, we will attract the best minds and foster innovative ideas. These will be the keys to giving our agriculture and food industry a step up in a very competitive world.

The McGuinty government's support for the new facilities at the Elora Beef Research Station is helping all of us to take a step forward. On behalf of the government of Ontario, I welcome this new facility to our agricultural and scientific communities. We all look forward to the benefits it will bring to the people of Ontario.

Speaking of beef—I had the opportunity to speak to the Minister of Natural Resources about this—whenever you're out in a restaurant or in a store, ask if it's Canadian, and if it's not Canadian, say no.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Responses?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I want to thank the minister for his non-announcement today. Obviously this is something that has been going on for some time and the minister is just reiterating what has been happening. But I do, on behalf of the agricultural community, want to thank the minister and the ministry for being involved in this project, because I think they support anything that will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of our beef industry.

As we already know, in Ontario we have the safest and best food in the world. I think it is very important that the minister stand up from time to time to expound on that and make sure everyone in our urban community realizes it.

But what I think is more important is that we can have faith in what the minister is saying. I want to take the minister back to what's been happening in the last few days, which kind of calls into question whether the announcement really is what it says it is. The minister will recall that two days ago I asked him when the cheques for the market revenue would start to flow from his announcement of March 29. He said, "The cheques are flowing. The cheques started to flow last week." We called Agricorp and found out that this was not the case, that no cheques were flowing. In your absence yesterday, when you were touring the research station, I asked the Premier, "Why would you say?"—and that's you, Minister—"on March 30 that the cheques would go out in two or three weeks, only to find out that they still haven't gone out?" The Premier stated yesterday that the cheques are being mailed out today and tomorrow. So what is the truth? Two days ago you said the cheques had already gone out last week; yesterday the Premier said they were going out in the next couple of days.

Minister, farmers want to be able to trust you and have confidence in what you say. Well, this is just another broken promise. When are you going to accept your responsibility to the farmers of Ontario, or are you going to continue with the Liberal promise-breaking tradition?

1420

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): I'll speak to what I consider to be another hot-air announcement by the Minister of Energy. I sincerely hope this is not more Liberal spin, desperately attempting to justify their irresponsible timeline for the closing of coal plants a year and a half from now.

What would be responsible is a cost-benefit analysis of clean coal and its relative cost vis-à-vis the environment, vis-à-vis our economy and with respect to the health of the people in Ontario. What would be responsible is a realistic timeline, and I would note that our leader, John Tory, sees a 2015 phase-out as a worthy goal. That's what it is: It's a goal we would have had, had we formed the government.

As government, we did work to mitigate emissions with a \$250-million investment in clean coal. The SCR—

selective catalytic reduction—units that have been applied are working. They are reducing emissions at your two favourite scapegoats: the OPG plants at both Nanticoke and Lambton.

Of course, I hear this government dismissing verified facts of emission reduction from clean coal technology because, very simply, it doesn't fit with their "Close coal in Ontario at all costs" agenda, when the reality is, once this government figures it out, that they won't have enough power to replace coal. They'll have to import coal from coal-fired plants in the United States, and we in return send jobs and investment to the United States, to the border states—and we import their air.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): On behalf of New Democrats, I want to respond. We have, yet again today, another \$110,000 exercise in media spin by the Minister of Energy. He spent \$110,000 to tell the people of Ontario that there are some health and environmental problems associated with coal-fired generating stations. People have known that for a long time. What people want to know is, what's the plan? What is the plan, for example, to replace coal? We still don't know what the plan is.

People want to know what the plan is for affordable electricity. We don't see any sign of that. People would also like to know, is there a plan for energy efficiency? We don't see that either. It's another spin exercise, another media exercise, that shows that the McGuinty government doesn't have a plan. They simply want to tell people something they already know.

What I find really interesting, though, when you look at what is not included in this plan, is: Was energy efficiency one of the options considered? What if you stopped using electric heat in the thousands of apartment buildings across this province that were built cheap in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s and that use very inefficient electric heat? Did the McGuinty government look at that? No. They wouldn't look at that. Did they look at helping low- and modest-income families who have inefficient refrigerators or appliances in their home? Did they look at what a low-interest loan program would do in assisting those families to purchase energy-efficient appliances and reduce their consumption of electricity? No.

What the McGuinty government is interested in, and this is what people really ought to pay attention to, is natural gas and nuclear.

I invite, especially members of the media, to take a close look at this thing. Look at, for example, the presumed health costs. One of the presumed health costs, if you look at it, is that there are very few health and environmental damages with nuclear. I invite the McGuinty government to go to Elliot Lake and talk to the widows who live there about all of the uranium miners who died from cancer associated with mining uranium. You go talk to them.

I invite you to talk to Eric Mintz, an epidemiologist who looked at the situation at the Port Hope nuclear refinery. This is what he found:

“Many of the diseases that might be of concern in Port Hope are normally rare ones like brain cancer and leukemia.”

The Premier should especially listen to this, because he likes to lecture everyone about children: “Since children generally have greater exposures and shorter induction times, the childhood data is of particular interest.

“Brain cancer was found to be highly elevated in Port Hope children during the period of 1971 to 1985, five times the provincial average.

“Children generally have greater exposures and shorter latency periods.... That the brain cancer excesses were greatest in children and appeared earlier is supportive of a real excess that is environmentally related.

“Ionizing radiation has been associated with brain cancer in research published worldwide.

“For all childhood cancers there was a 48% increase over expected rates and for childhood leukemia a 63% elevation over what might be expected.”

The McGuinty government produces a report that tries to say that there are no environmental or few environmental and health consequences associated with nuclear. You should stop issuing cooked reports.

Even more, they then trot out a table saying that the costs of building nuclear plants are fairly predictable and low. Was this the \$4-billion estimate that you gave for Darlington, and then, when you completed Darlington, it cost \$15 billion—an \$11-billion cost overrun? Is this the billions of dollars that have been spent on refurbishing when it was only supposed to cost a little bit?

Look, don't insult people. You want to see a real study on coal? This is a good study on coal.

This is nothing but a cooked media exercise that isn't worth the paper it's printed on.

VISITORS

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I am sure the House will want to welcome people here from Chieti, Italy: students on an exchange program being hosted by their counterparts at Notre Dame College School in Welland.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): While the students are very much welcome, the third party House leader knows that's not a point of order.

1430

ORAL QUESTIONS

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. Yesterday you said you were “proud of the new relationship we have developed with Ontario's municipalities.... It is good news for all the people of Ontario.”

Applause.

Mr. Tory: I notice it's just a very few who are clapping, Mr. Speaker.

I want to quote from today's London Free Press: “Elgin county council is both shocked and appalled,” Warden James McIntyre wrote....

“The change would leave county officials with \$3.7 million less by 2008, a shortfall so deep the tax hike needed to make up the difference would be 20%.”

Premier, can you confirm for the people supposedly represented by your Minister of Agriculture how proud the two of you are to be handing them a 20% property tax increase?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): We inherited a system that was broken, opaque and unfair. We have fixed that system. It is now transparent and it is now fair.

The leader of the official opposition tells us that he prefers the status quo. He, in fact, embraces the status quo. That would mean that in Caledon, for example, that community would receive \$1.2 million less. In Kawartha Lakes, that community would receive \$2.7 million less. In Port Colborne, they'd receive \$1 million less. I can go on and on.

If the leader of the official opposition is telling us that he has some alternate plan; that, in addition to taking \$2.4 billion out of health care and taking money out of public education and putting that into private schools, he has now found some secret pile of money to help those communities he's advocating on behalf of, then he should stand in his place today and tell us how much money he's going to flow to those communities.

Mr. Tory: All we're asking for is some fairness for all of the communities in Ontario. All we're asking for is some fairness for all of the people who choose to send their children to independent schools, and all we're asking for is some fairness to taxpayers, to whom you promised you would not increase taxes at the time of the last election.

Premier, the same London Free Press article confirms that Chatham-Kent, St. Thomas, Stratford, Sarnia and Elgin county will see taxpayers “stung” by your so-called fairer deal. Will you confirm that you have the full support of the member for Chatham-Kent Essex in cutting what local treasurer Stuart Wood says is about 14% of its tax base? He calls it “a huge hit” for Chatham-Kent. Can you confirm that you and the member for Chatham-Kent Essex think that this double-digit property tax increase for the people who live there is, to use your words, “good news” for them?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Let me tell you, first of all, that Pat Hoy is an absolutely marvellous representative on behalf of his community—absolutely marvellous.

I know that the leader of the official opposition will be interested in some of the comments made about this new Ontario municipal partnership fund.

Bill Murdoch, for instance, said, “I appreciate the money that Hanover is going to get: I will applaud that.”

Here's the township treasurer, Margaret Black from Ramara township, who says, “With a \$685,000 grant from the province, Ramara township can potentially erase a projected 5.39% municipal tax increase and put a

large sum of money in the bank.... Taxes can't go anywhere but lower."

That is the end result of this new program. It is fair, it is transparent and it was desperately needed.

Mr. Tory: We agree that the member for Chatham-Kent Essex is a good fellow. You should probably start listening to him if he's saying to you that this is unfair that you're fleecing his taxpayers in this way.

Premier, according to municipal treasurers, St. Thomas will lose \$1.4 million in annual funding, Stratford will get about \$550,000 less and Sarnia will be down \$230,000. These are the numbers presented by municipal treasurers. Taxpayers in those areas, according to Sarnia Mayor Mike Bradley, one of your fellow travellers, are being "fleeced."

You said that your new program is good news for all. Can you explain to taxpayers in Chatham-Kent, St. Thomas, Stratford and Sarnia, who are being let down by your Liberal MPPs, how getting fleeced is good news for them?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, the leader of the official opposition is a defender of the status quo, and we don't accept the status quo. Remember, the motivation for this came as a result of the supposedly neutral downloading process left to us by the Tories. We've decided to clean this up. We've introduced a new system that is fair and transparent.

Let me tell you about some of the things it does. Mr. Tory may not like this, but in Caledon they're getting \$1.2 million more; Kawartha Lakes, \$2.7 million more; Port Colborne, \$1 million more; Gananoque, \$302,000 more; Pembroke, \$418,000 more; Wilmot, \$556,000 more; Smiths Falls, \$568,000 more; Wasaga Beach, \$765,000 more; Gravenhurst, \$674,000 more; and Ingersoll is getting \$600,000 more as a result of this new program. I can tell you that people in those communities, as well as the Ontario Municipal Association, are pleased with this program.

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

Mr. Tory: Only this Premier could describe a program that robs Peter to pay Paul as being fair.

My question is again to the Premier. Yesterday, when we asked about the funding cuts in Cobourg under this new so-called fairer program you continue to extol today, you answered that Leeds-Grenville, almost two hours down the 401 from Cobourg, is better off. Well, Augusta township in Leeds-Grenville will lose over \$150,000 in annual funding starting next year under this new McGuinty program. The township's chief administrative officer, Sharon Wilkinson, quoted in the Brockville Recorder and Times, says that residents could face a property tax increase of more than 120% as a result of your cuts. Premier, how can you explain that a 120% property tax increase, due to your cuts, is the good news that you keep standing here and talking about? How could that be?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I know the Chair of the Management Board is anxious to get in on this.

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Again, I think the people of Ontario

should appreciate what we have developed here. This is a fair and transparent formula that treats all municipalities in the province fairly. It is open, it is transparent, and the people of Ontario should understand that.

Secondly, we're talking about adding \$38 million. This may not seem like a lot to the Leader of the Opposition, but to the taxpayers of Ontario, it's over a 6% increase in this fund. Every single municipality in the province will receive at least as much money in 2005 as they got in 2004. We think this is a fair and equitable formula, and it's responsible in the interest of the taxpayers.

Mr. Tory: Again to the Premier: You keep listing the people that you claim were on the elevator; we know the people who are getting the shaft here.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Tory: Yesterday's Owen Sound Sun Times says the municipality of Grey Highlands will lose \$825,000 over the next four years under your so-called good-news-for-all program. According to Treasurer Alan Selby, that is 25% of that municipality's budget. He's quoted as saying, "We will have to raise our tax rates by 25% and/or make expense cuts over the next four years." Across Grey county, seven of the nine municipalities are losing money under this so-called fairer program. You said this is good news for all Ontarians. Are you proud of the good news that the 25% McGuinty property tax increase represents for residents of Grey county? Are you proud of that?

Hon. Mr. Phillips: What do the people of Ontario expect? They expect that their provincial government will treat every municipality fairly and equitably. You have not yet indicated any concern or disagreement with the fairness of the formula. The formula is fair. It treats each municipality fairly and equitably. I repeat to the people of Ontario: \$38 million more money in this fund this year, a 6.1% increase, no municipality getting less money and I think 250 municipalities getting more money. So I say once again to the leader of the third party, what do the people of Ontario expect from the provincial government? It's fairness, it's equity and that we treat every municipality fairly. That's exactly what this formula does. I have yet to hear you dispute the fairness of the formula. That's what this formula gives: fairness and equity to every municipality.

Mr. Tory: I think that the residents of St. Thomas and Sarnia and Grey Highlands and Huron county—which I'm going to talk about now—expect some honesty from this government. That's what they expect, but they're going to be waiting a long time for that.

Premier, Huron county is set to lose every single penny in annual funding under your so-called good-news-for-all program. Incredibly, your member for Huron-Bruce calls this good news for her riding. Huron county treasurer, David Carey, quoted in the Goderich Signal-Star said that at first glance the program sounds great, but it will cost the county in the long term. According to the county's own numbers, over \$2.4 million in

funding will be phased out over the next four years. Councillor David Urlin says the provincial changes were “on the back of rural Ontario again.”

Premier, how can you and the member for Huron–Bruce describe a \$2.4-million cut in funding as good news for the residents of Huron county? How can do you that?

1440

Hon. Mr. Phillips: I don’t mean to embarrass the member. I know you are attempting to speak on behalf of the municipalities in Ontario. You put out a release the other day saying that in the riding of Perth–Middlesex, my colleague Mr. Wilkinson’s riding, one of his municipalities, Southgate, was going to get a cut. Well, I should inform the people of Ontario that Southgate is not in Perth–Middlesex; it’s in the Leader of the Opposition’s riding. So I wonder if a page could come over and—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I’d just ask members to stop heckling the Chair of Management Board so he can just finish his answer in 10 seconds.

Hon. Mr. Phillips: I will be sending a map over to the Leader of the Opposition, which indicates that Southgate is actually in your riding. So if you’re purporting to speak on behalf of municipalities, I think they should understand that you are not quite sure what municipalities are in your own riding.

Mr. Tory: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The residents of Southgate, which is in my riding—and I’m proud of that—are appalled at this cutback regardless of whose riding it is.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. That might be a disagreement, but it’s not a point of order.

CHILDREN’S SERVICES

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. The first 18 months of the McGuinty government have been difficult and painful for Ontario’s children. Some 373,000 Ontario children live below the poverty line. Nine out of 10 Ontario children lack access to adequate child care. Hundreds of Ontario’s autistic children are going without the IBI therapy they desperately need. Severely disabled children are being taken from their families, and custody is being taken by children’s aid societies in order that those children can get the services they need. I would say this is simply inexcusable and unacceptable in Ontario today.

Premier, you promised to do something about these things, and so far these children haven’t seen anything from your government. When are you going to keep these promises?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Speaker, you won’t be surprised to learn that I take issue with the leader of the NDP’s statements and assertions.

No government ever before has moved more quickly when it comes to helping children in this province, and

I’m very proud of our record. In our first 17 months or so, we have invested an additional \$1.7 billion to help children. We created a new ministry specifically responsible for children and youth services—never been done before. We’ve invested \$156 million for free vaccines for children. That saves the family, by the way, about \$600 per child. We have invested \$1.1 billion in education funding alone for smaller classes, more teachers, more training, a better learning environment and, not surprisingly, better test scores. We have invested \$365 million in special education funding and \$58 million to create 4,000 new affordable child care spaces. That is the first boost in 10 years.

We are proud of our record when it comes to supporting the children of Ontario.

Mr. Hampton: It’s bizarre to hear the Premier take credit for, in fact, federal money that’s come to Ontario.

Premier, this is what you had to say during the election: “We will help our schools develop good citizens through character education. Character education is about values such as respect, honesty, responsibility and fairness.” But right now families are wondering: Does it show respect to refuse to meet with the parents of autistic children? Does it show respect when you refuse to meet with children who are affected by your promise to stop the clawback of the national child benefit? Does it show responsibility to promise 300 million provincial dollars for child care and fail to provide even a penny? Does it show fairness to discriminate against children because of age, disability and poverty? Premier, what lesson do you think children are getting as a result of your government’s lack of character and failure to keep your promises?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Let me take the opportunity to tell you what else we are doing for Ontario children. Of course, my measure for success is not the leader of the NDP. We speak to reasonable, objective people in Ontario. Given our circumstances, I am proud that we have found \$1.7 billion for additional investment in programs that support Ontario children.

Some of the other things we have already invested in, and there is always more to do, but let me tell you about some of the things we have already done: \$25 million for children’s mental health programs; that is the first significant increase in 12 years. Now, it is not enough for the leader of NDP, but we are proud of that. We have invested an additional \$64 million in our children’s aid societies. Again, it is not enough for the leader of the NDP, but we’re proud of that record. We’ve invested \$8.3 million in our Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program. It’s not enough for the leader of the NDP, but we are proud of that program. I have more as well to list subsequently.

Mr. Hampton: It is interesting to hear Dalton McGuinty take credit for federal money invested in Healthy Babies, Healthy Children.

Premier, I want to ask you about just one child, who is seriously affected by one of your broken promises. She’s a young girl named Natasha, who believed you when you

said you would stop clawing back the national child benefit supplement from her and her family. Here is what Natasha wrote on this postcard, and you might be interested to read this postcard. It says, "I like to draw animé and read those books, but our school library doesn't have them and my parents can't afford to buy them. Please help us by letting us keep the money."

Premier, where is the character in your government, when you promised to end the clawback of the national child benefit and then you do this to a little girl like Natasha?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Let me say that, again, I am very proud of the fact that we have stopped clawing back the national child benefit. That has resulted in a \$7-million increase this year alone. Next year's increase will grow to a \$20-million investment.

We are proud of our record when it comes to supporting Ontario's children, especially given our financial circumstances. We are proud of the fact that we have come up with an additional \$1.7 billion in addition to those programs I listed earlier. We found \$4.7 million in pre-school speech and language programs; \$1.2 million in a new infant hearing program; \$24 million over four years in capital funding for our children's treatment centres. Those are all good programs. They all speak to our fundamental values, which reflect the values of the people of Ontario. We are there for our children when they need us, and we will continue to do more for them.

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

Mr. Hampton: To the Premier: You haven't stopped clawing back the national child benefit. This is what families get: \$1 a week. You keep 97% of the money, and don't try to fool parents, like parents here, that somehow you are not doing that.

I want to ask you about another situation. Ontario's new Ombudsman, André Marin, believes there is a very serious issue that requires in effect a special investigation into the care of children with severe disabilities. Many families, many parents across this province have to give up custody of their children to children's aid societies in order that their children receive the services they need. They're forced to give up custody, sometimes forever.

Your government has known about this for the last 18 months, yet you've done nothing about that as well. Tell us, Premier, where is the character in your government's behaviour on this issue?

1450

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I welcome the new Ombudsman to his post and look forward to working with him. But we did not wait for the new Ombudsman or his comments to start working on this issue; we've already started. The truth of the matter is that for over a decade there weren't any significant increases for children's mental health or children's treatment centres or anything for special-needs children in this province. The solution is to build capacity

so that all children can have the resources and therapies they need. We're doing that. Unfortunately it will not happen overnight, but we are well on our way to meeting the needs of the children of this province.

Mr. Hampton: The McGuinty government wants people to believe that stopping the clawback of one loonie a week is something really important for families who are struggling on the lowest incomes in the province. But what they're wondering about is this: They're getting a character lesson all right: the character of a Liberal government that neglects children with the highest needs in the province, the character of a Liberal government that breaks promises to children over and over again. Some parents are forced to give up custody of their children just to get the services they need.

Premier, it was you who said that character education is about values such as respect, honesty, responsibility and fairness. Where's the fairness to those parents? Where's the fairness to these kids who are struggling on the lowest incomes in the province, and you're taking 90% of the child benefit away from them every month?

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: I'm very proud of our government's record and the Premier's record in helping the children of this province. Last year, in a very, very difficult budget, we increased children's services by \$200 million, and that's only this ministry alone, not counting education, not counting community and social services and not counting health. I'd like to remind the honourable member of his government's record on mental health in children: They cut funding for mental health by \$23.3 million in 1992 and again by \$42 million in 1994. We increased mental health money for children alone by \$25 million in our first year, which grows to \$38 million in our second year. I'll put my record against his record any day.

Mr. Hampton: I've heard it said that the last refuge of a scoundrel is to try to rewrite history. This is the history of your government, Premier. I want to remind you of three promises that you made to children. Number 1, the baby bonus: "We will end the clawback—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Could I ask the government side to come to order. I cannot hear the leader of the third party's question.

Mr. Hampton: Number 1: "We will end the clawback of the national child benefit supplement. This clawback is wrong and we will end it."

Promise number 2: "We are committing \$300 million in new provincial money for Best Start; we will spend this money in the right way for child care."

Promise number 3, on autism: "I believe that the lack of government-funded IBI treatment for autistic children over six is unfair and discriminatory. The Ontario Liberals support extending" IBI "treatment beyond the age of six."

Premier, today we are going to present a motion after question period holding you to your three promises. Are you going to show up to support and vote for your own promises?

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: I'm very proud to say that Best Start is well on its way. We've created 4,000 new spaces, the first investment in child care in over a decade. We have—

Interjection.

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): The member from Hamilton's not in her seat.

The Speaker: Order. I'm quite aware of that. I'd like some order so that the minister can respond to the question.

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: I'm very proud to say that we have significantly increased the funding for IBI therapy for children with autism, we have reduced the waiting list for assessment by 72%, and as of last month, 25% more children were receiving IBI therapy. We're the only jurisdiction in North America that actually does this on a systematic level.

On Monday, I met with the head of special education for the US government. No federal or state government even recommends any particular therapy, and yet we give up to 40 hour a week for children with autism under the age of six. Another comparison they don't want to hear is that in the United States, the children that do receive it, receive up to 25 hours. Again, we are the most generous in North America.

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): My question is for the Premier. Premier, your Chair of Management Board was talking about fairness, but my warden in Renfrew county doesn't see much fairness in your Ontario municipal partnership fund formula. What looked like a reasonable, modest increase of 8.7% in 2005 turns out, once your shell game is discovered, to be a \$3.7-million decrease in 2006, a further \$500,000 in 2007, and \$850,000 less in 2008. This is not fair. For one of the most economically challenged areas of the province, my county of Renfrew, it simply cannot be tolerated. Massive tax increases will have to follow to ratepayers if you do not do something to assist places like Renfrew county. This is not fair. How do you square that with the people of Renfrew county and Warden Bob Sweet?.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): To the Chair of Management Board.

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): What is the purpose of this? It is to ensure that every single municipality is treated fairly. I remind the people of Ontario that we are fixing a dramatic problem created by the previous Conservative government, where they downloaded enormous services on to the municipalities and then developed a formula that made no sense. There was no logic to the formula. Municipalities told us, "We need a fair and equitable formula." So we've done what I think the people of Ontario would expect: a fair, transparent formula. I would

repeat: \$38 million, over a 6% increase in 2005. I think the taxpayers will be shaking their heads. Do you not think a 6% increase is fair? Do you not think \$38 million is fair? Do you not think the fact that every single municipality in the province gets at least as much money in 2005 as it did in 2004 is fair?

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Supplementary.

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): Premier, travel south to tobacco country. On March 29, your government announced \$15 million in transition funding for the tobacco counties of Elgin, Oxford, Norfolk and Brant. However, less than two weeks later, you announced the same tobacco counties will now receive a CRF cut of \$15.6 million. I quote Norfolk Mayor Rita Kalmbach: "Now we seem to be penalized and the heavily populated areas are getting the attention," and, "Certainly I am ready to lobby with the other mayors to tell Dalton McGuinty ... this is not good enough." Last night Norfolk county council indicated they're shut out of COMRIF. Councillor John Wells: "We seem left out in the cold." Councillor Ted Whitworth: "The McGuinty government seems systematically hostile to the interests of rural Ontario."

Premier, can you tell me, the mayor of Norfolk and Norfolk county councillors, why are you hostile to rural Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Phillips: I go back to the inconsistencies between the facts and what the Conservative Party purports. They said there's going to be a \$47-million cut. There's no \$47-million cut. There's a \$38-million increase. Again the member, I think, has indicated a cut: No municipality in 2005 is getting less money than they did in 2004. We have developed a formula to deal with our municipalities that, if you look at it, is fair, transparent and deals with the issues the municipalities come to us with: policing; social services; a special part of the formula dealing with our smaller municipalities, our northern municipalities. It's a fair, transparent formula. I say to the people of Ontario again: \$38 million more, a 6% increase. No municipality is getting less money. I think that's what the people of Ontario would expect from us, and that's what we've delivered.

1500

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Three moms of autistic children are in the gallery today, wondering about IBI for their sons.

Jacob Vogels has been on the wait list at Kinark since April 2003. His family has taken out a loan and borrowed money from family to pay for his treatment.

Jonathan Cordona has been on the wait list at TPAS since May 2003. His family paid for IBI from September 2003 to December 2004 by remortgaging their home and borrowing money from family.

Joshua Currie started on the wait list at Kinark on December 16, 2002. He finally got service two days before his sixth birthday. He needs ongoing IBI.

Justice Kiteley's decision is forcing you to do what Dalton McGuinty promised to do, which is to stop cutting off children at the age of six. It means—just like McGuinty's promise meant—that you have to increase IBI to those under six and you have to start IBI in the schools for those over six to ensure that all the needs will be met.

Minister, what concrete steps are you taking to provide IBI at school and to increase IBI for those under six to ensure that the needs of Jacob, Jonathan and Joshua will all be met?

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): The honourable member knows well enough that even before this decision by the judge, we had enhanced the under-six program. We had invested \$10 million of new money for the IBI program for those under the age of six. We had 25% more children under the age of six accessing IBI therapy, and we reduced significantly the wait list for assessment. The ruling has added complexities to the wait list, and we are studying the implications of those.

We also had, before the ruling, a school-based program to supplement the already very generous program that the Minister of Education has for all special-needs children in the schools, and I will talk about that some more in the supplementary.

Ms. Martel: Let me quote from what Justice Kiteley says about the school program:

“The Minister of Education failed to develop policy and give direction to school boards to ensure that ... IBI services are provided to children of compulsory school age. Indeed, the actions and inactions of the Ministry of Education and the minister created a policy barrier to the availability of IBI ... in school. The absence of ... IBI means that children with autism are excluded from the opportunity to access learning with the consequential deprivation of skills, the likelihood of isolation from society and the loss of the ability to exercise the rights and freedoms to which all Canadians are entitled.”

That's your school program, Minister. You should be ashamed of it. When Dalton McGuinty made the promise that he did, if he meant what he said—and that is questionable—it meant that your government would have to provide IBI in the school and would have to increase services for those under six. I ask you again: What concrete steps are you taking to provide IBI in the school and to provide more IBI for those under six so that these children get the IBI they need?

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: Before I answer the question, a point of clarification: The judge was not referring to my ministry's school-based program. She knew very well that it was a new program that was just being implemented.

We have some data from that program: Since September, our autism professionals have had more than 3,400 contacts with educational assistants and more than 2,200 contacts with teachers across the province. This is particularly important for the north and rural areas. We

are closing the gap between the resources that are available in many urban areas for children with special needs and those in the north. I would hope that the member opposite would care about what we are doing for the north, because 316 schools in the north are covered so far by our new program; 600 customized resources developed for teachers and EAs to help these children. So we are moving ahead to help children in the schools.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): My question is for the Minister of Energy. The Ontario Medical Association has long held that air pollution in Ontario has a significant impact on human health, and numerous studies have shown that our coal plants are some of the worst polluters in North America, let alone Ontario.

Minister, I understand you released a new study today that delves into the true cost of coal, which takes into account the health and environmental costs of coal and which better reflects the true sticker price of this form of electricity generation. I'm sure this study will be truly interesting to the members of the opposition and to this House. It will be interesting for my residents of Mississauga East to hear of this study. For all Ontarians, can you please impart some of the details of this study?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I'm pleased to respond to the question. When health and environmental impacts are considered, coal is shown to be the most expensive electricity generation option for Ontario. The study shows the true cost of coal is in air-pollution-related illnesses, hospital visits, and indeed, unfortunately, premature deaths. The true cost of coal is \$4.4 billion annually. Some 77% of this represents hidden health and environmental damages that coal causes. Replacing coal with mixed refurbished nuclear and natural gas generation would have total real costs, including health and environmental costs, of \$1.94 billion annually, half the cost of coal. More stringent controls on coal still result in total annual costs of \$2.8 billion, a billion more than the options we have been pursuing.

Mr. Fonseca: Minister, I have to say that I feel sorry for the member for Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey. You see, on Monday he was in the Sarnia Observer, saying that the elimination of coal-fired plants is a good goal. But then, I guess, his caucus got hold of him. Perhaps dirty coal supporters like Jim Flaherty and John Baird are still calling the shots, because the next day the official opposition's supposed leader had the Sarnia Observer issue a correction to their Monday story. Not only that, but along with the correction a whole new story came out on Tuesday, and guess what the headline was. The headline was “Coal Not Ruled Out by Tory.” That's quite a flip-flop. Even Ernie Eves supported the coal shutdown. Minister, what type of position is the member for Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey taking?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: The member is absolutely right. Let's be charitable and say the Tories have had a soft

position on this issue all across the province, and the issue changes from day to day.

Tomorrow, we will be closing Lakeview—the first closure of a coal plant. I should tell you, even though the Tories oppose that, even though they tell us to keep the coal plants open—

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: Here are the quotes from the House; here's Hansard. Toby Barrett: "Quite recently, this evening, the member for Halton mentioned that shutting down coal plants would be a huge mistake." There it is. John Baird: "But for Nanticoke and Lambton and the two in northern Ontario, the shutdowns are just foolish." He says keep it open. We say no, we won't. We say 2015 is too far off in the future. We've set a goal. We're moving to it. We're going to achieve it. We're going clean up the air and fix the mess the Tory government left this province for so long.

ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Premier. Despite pleas from patients and their families, you refuse to fund treatment for orphan diseases such as Fabry, and notwithstanding a court order, you continue to refuse to provide funding for IBI treatment for autistic children. I want to read you another promise you made, and this is from your election campaign platform: "The number of deaths caused by anaphylactic reactions to food is increasing every year. Without immediate attention, severely allergic children can die from anaphylactic shock. To protect children with life-threatening allergies, we will require every school to develop an anaphylactic plan based on province-wide standards."

Mr. Premier, you have now been in government for 18 months. There is no such plan in the province to date. Have you changed your mind about this? Is it no longer urgent? When do you intend to put this plan in place?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): To the Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The honourable member will know that, in 18 months, this has been a very activist government with respect to efforts and initiatives to protect our children. We have a tremendous advantage, obviously, on the very specific issue the honourable member raised, and it's to be found in the form of our government whip, who has brought forward a piece of legislation that I believe enjoys very significant support in this Legislature. It's before committee. This is a demonstration of our government's commitment to be able to move forward and make progress on an issue.

1510

I, like all members, am a recipient of significant interest from the community. But I just want to say to the honourable member that his attempt to signify this issue as one of inaction is rather inappropriate, given the very long list of initiatives targeted at children that the Premier

had the opportunity earlier in question period to apprise all members of.

Mr. Klees: I'd like to remind the Minister of Health and the Premier that the member from Brant introduced his bill, Bill 3, in this House some 18 months ago. It is not before committee. It is awaiting committee hearings. It has not been called for committee.

This Premier and this government refuse to live up to their promise to take action. In the words of the member from Brant, when he was debating this issue, he made it very clear that this is an urgent issue, that children are at risk—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): I'll give you a chance to ask the question.

Could I ask the ministers to be quiet, please. When I say "ministers," I know there are some who are quiet in question period, but there are many who just keep on shouting down members when they are asking a question. I would appreciate very much if you'd keep quiet so I can hear the questions from the other side.

Mr. Klees: During the time of debate on Bill 3, the member from Brant made this statement in this House: "We've had examples of young children dying as a result of anaphylactic shock." This was an urgent matter. It was a promise by the Premier during the election campaign. We have had no action. This bill has not been called before committee.

I'm asking the Premier: Do you consider this an urgent issue, or are you going to break this promise, as you have done many others, and insist that people continue to beg you to look after it?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Government House leader.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Unlike the previous government, we sent this bill to committee. That party, when it was in office, voted against sending the bill to committee. We have offered to that party to begin calling private members' bills in committee.

I can assure you, this bill will be called in committee and it will receive the kind of hearing it deserves and, I'll remind the member, the kind of hearing it didn't get in 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003: all years that that bill sat on the order paper and your government refused to deal with it. This government's taking action.

The member may want to refer to today's Hansard. It's on page 20, under the standing committee on general government: Bill 3, under Mr. Levac's name.

Let me tell you, if you start co-operating, we'll bring private members' bills to committees. You wouldn't even send them there.

We're proud of our record. We're proud of our member. Thank goodness he stood up on this issue.

NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT SUPPLEMENT

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches—East York): My question is to the Premier. Premier, you continually and

almost daily break your promise to end the clawback of the baby bonus from kids whose parents are on social assistance. To date, 115 organizations and 30 municipalities have joined the Hands Off the Baby Bonus campaign. Perhaps you've seen some of the cards: a little boy named Dylan. His mother's in the audience today.

First Nations communities and leaders have added their voices to the campaign. Last week, Alvin Fiddler, the deputy grand chief of the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation, said, "We will continue to apply pressure to the province to honour their campaign commitment" to end the clawback.

Your own minister is flying north to see the poverty of the First Nations. Premier, can you tell First Nations people across Ontario why you continue to break your promise to address the endemic poverty in their communities?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I'm extremely proud that, for the first time in 12 years, my colleague Minister Papatello and our government increased social assistance for the most vulnerable in the province. I'm also very proud of my colleague and my government because we did stop going forward on the clawback from the federal government to the poorest of the poor, which is \$7 million extra money for parents and children who need it most. This number will increase to over \$22 million this year.

I also have to remind the honourable member across the way that part of the money that was planned with the former government goes to children's treatment centres and children's mental health programs, which often do help the most vulnerable and the poorest children in our province.

Mr. Prue: This government can find \$400 million for gambling in Windsor; this government can only find \$7 million for the poorest of poor children.

Mr. Premier, here's what parents affected by the clawback have to say: Madeline Chokomolin of Wahgoshig First Nation, a single mother of five, says, "This is only an effective system to keep the poor poor, while people like Premier Dalton McGuinty could dine on fine foods without giving a second thought to those children affected by the clawback."

Donna, from Keewatin, says, "I am raising three children and working. My children need the money you promised."

Maureen, from Hamilton, says, "Teenagers, as you must know, cost a fortune. How about some help? I helped elect you, so how about helping us too?"

Premier, this afternoon we will debate a motion calling on you to keep your promise to end the clawback, a promise you made and reiterated many times. Will you be there to debate it? More importantly, will you vote yes to keep your own promises?

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: I'm incredibly proud of another colleague, the Minister of Health, George

Smitherman, who increased significantly funding for the aboriginal healing wellness strategy, which was flatlined for 10 years.

Also, I'd like to remind the honourable member that we doubled, from \$4 million to \$8.5 million, student nutrition programs and increased the efficiency with respect to how they will be implemented in the schools. We also invested an additional \$8.3 million in Healthy Babies, Healthy Children. A lot of that money does go toward helping the poorest of the poor in the province.

I want to reiterate that for the first time in 12 years we've increased social assistance to the most vulnerable in this province. We know we need to do more, and we are working well together as colleagues, as a government, with the help of our municipal partners, and in future with our federal partners, to do even more for the people of this province.

FILM CLASSIFICATION

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. There's been a lot of talk in the press about Bill 158, the film classification legislation. As I understand it, the old Theatres Act was last updated in 1962, so it was obviously in desperate need of an update. Minister, how does this legislation reflect the changing marketplace while continuing to protect and inform Ontario's citizens? And how does this new legislation respond to last year's court decision on film classification?

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): I thank the member for Willowdale for his question. At the members know, Bill 158 just appeared at committee yesterday. It deals with a court ruling that was handed down a little over a year ago. Our lawyers and the Attorney General's lawyers have reviewed the legislation and are quite confident that it lives up to the judge's ruling from a year ago.

I also want to point out the support that this piece of legislation has from an individual who has great respect in the community, Bill Moody, an educator and former chair of the OFRB. He said, as a result of our keeping the classification authority in the bill, "It's ludicrous to think that parents have the time, tools or expertise to preview every movie that their children may want to see or electronic game their child may want to play. A classification system that provides a consistent manner of reporting, to which parents can refer, that is clear and transparent has become a real necessity."

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Order. The member from Niagara Centre, could you just keep your voice down a bit.

Mr. Zimmer: Minister, parents rely on the film ratings when taking their kids to movies. I understand that video game ratings are being enforced, which is welcome news for the many parents shocked at the graphic materials in some of these games.

Sue Lott, counsel of the Public Interest Advocacy Centre agrees. She says, "As a consumer organization, the Public Interest Advocacy Centre supports the government's initiative, through the Film Classification Act, to provide helpful information to Ontario consumers. We are also pleased that this legislation respects the Charter of Rights' important protections around freedom of expression."

Minister, if this legislation is passed, the power of the film board to censor mainstream films will no longer exist. How, then, does the legislation ensure that the most vulnerable members of our society, our children, are still protected from seeing material inappropriate for children?

1520

Hon. Mr. Watson: The member has a very good point. The fact of the matter is that under Bill 158, we still remain in the classification business because we think that is an important public service that the OFRB does provide. I was disappointed, to be perfectly honest, that the NDP spent an awful lot more time not defending the rights of parents, not defending the rights of children, but basically cozying up to the pornography industry and supporting their point of view that we should be out of the classification business.

I believe that Bill 158 is on the right track. The Retail Council of Canada is supportive, as are the Entertainment Software Association of Canada, parents and educators. I'd urge the NDP and the member from Niagara Centre to spend a little more time defending the rights of parents and children and a little less time defending the rights of the pornography industry in Ontario.

COURT SECURITY

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question today is for the Attorney General. Your government received a report on October 9, 2003, just shortly after you were elected, which was the result of a broad consultation on court security undertaken by Hugh Thomas. That was almost 20 months ago. Now I understand you're consulting on this issue yet again. This time the member from Guelph-Wellington is leading the review of court security issues involving municipalities and police chiefs. We believe the time for consultation has come to an end and it's time for some action. As the minister responsible for court security in this province, please tell us exactly what options are on the table right now to resolve this issue and, specifically, are you actually considering having the province take over court security?

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I thank the member for the question. Yes, we are continuing to not only speak with local municipalities and chiefs of police, who I regularly meet with, but with police associations on the subject of court security. It is, obviously, partly a jurisdictional issue that involves an independent judiciary, and their adminis-

trative independence is protected under our constitution. Then the issue becomes whether, in the courthouses themselves, the Ministry of the Attorney General is in fact going to be responsible for it or the municipalities are going to be responsible for it. It has been more than 10 years now that it has been a local decision involving local priorities and a local perspective that permits the appropriate security for each of those courthouses.

Mr. Dunlop: The McGuinty government's lack of action has left police services asking many questions. For example, the city of Owen Sound has a huge shortfall in the area of court security, and that's been drawn to our attention. I know that your government is floating the idea of taking the funding for the 1,000 promised police officers and using it instead to resolve the court security issue. That's our understanding and that's what's been drawn to our attention. If you're even thinking about doing this, police services need to know that, and they need to know now. They've already been subjected to more than their fair share of zero-dollar announcements from your government. Minister, why is your government even talking about breaking its promise of hiring 1,000 new police officers, especially to fix a problem that falls under your ministry?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: I'm happy to answer your question. I'll say, though, that the responsibility for court security falls under the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, and I know, as justice critic, you'd know that.

We're working with municipalities to find solutions. It's the responsibility of municipalities. It's the local perspective that deals with court facilities to pay for these costs when they're used by neighbouring municipalities. I certainly am very interested in any suggestions the member may have with respect to how we might be doing a better job. I do believe that the parliamentary assistant to Minister Kwinter is leading an excellent review of court security issues, and I would expect that she would want to get your input on that as well. I thank the member for his question.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. On February 17, and in fact again today, you said that you've created over 4,000 new child care spaces in Ontario. Minister, you know you misspoke. Here's your chance to correct the record. You claim the McGuinty government funded actual child care spaces. You know that the new spaces were created by the federal government. You had nothing to do with it. You promised to invest but, in reality, you haven't created—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Order.

Ms. Horwath: You promised to invest, but in reality, you haven't created a single new not-for-profit child care space for any of the 30,000 children on the waiting list.

Why are you pretending to do something that you are not doing?

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I'm very disappointed that the honourable member uses those words to ask the question, because I know that she knows me, and I know her quite well and respect her, and I believe there's mutual respect.

There's no pretence here. When we made these announcements, we readily said that this was federal money. This was the first time federal money for child care was spent for child care in over a decade. There's no pretence there. But the lion's share of child care is still paid for by the province of Ontario. We look forward to working with Minister Dryden toward getting more money for child care and investing in our Best Start plan.

As I said earlier, our Best Start plan has already begun. One of the three demonstration sites which will guide us are in the honourable member's riding, and she knows that quite well, as well.

Ms. Horwath: Contrary to the flowery words of the minister, there are no new provincial dollars that are flowing for direct funding, nor Ontario dollars for more non-profit child care spaces—no investment in the issues that she describes for zero to threes, nothing for the over sixes. What kind of game is being run here, Minister? The expansion that you talk about is a waiting game. Direct funding of non-profit child care is a simple, clear and immediate solution.

When you were in opposition, you told advocates that you were committed to a directly funded model. Why have you changed your tune? There's no direct funding. Your model is about as seamless as a patchwork quilt. Admit that your approach is full of holes.

Will you commit to expanding the number of non-profit child care spaces by providing direct, stable core funding, and vote for our opposition motion today? Will you commit to fixing at least the 10 problems that the child care experts said you need to fix?

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: First, let me clarify. When I was in opposition, I respected both the not-for-profit and the for-profit centres, because they are under the same regulations and provide excellent services for children across this province.

Having said that, 95% of our child care centres in schools are not-for-profit. We don't anticipate that to change for our Best Start plan. The member knows quite well, because I told her this last week, last Thursday—whenever we ate with the chamber here and in the Legislature—that the demonstration site monies are provincial money. The healthy babies is provincial money. The infant hearing is provincial money. So the member is wrong, and I'd be very happy to arrange for a briefing from my ministry.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay–Atikokan): My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. As you

know, today Abitibi Consolidated announced the putting up for sale of their mill in Thunder Bay. The company believes that this operation could create more immediate value to another party and is therefore preparing to sell the operation, whose fibre needs are met by associated crown licences. A freehold of more than 500,000 acres of privately owned timber lands near Thunder Bay is also going to be marketed for sale during the second quarter.

This is potentially bad news for the community of Thunder Bay and the employees of the Abitibi mill. Minister, can you tell us today what you are doing to help Abitibi Consolidated maintain their workforce?

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources): I'd like to thank the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan for the concern that I know he has. He has spoken to me many times about the consolidation that is going on in the pulp and paper industry, and I know how dependent Thunder Bay is on this particular sector of the forest industry.

I and my ministry have met with this particular company three times and are working with them on their plans. We think there's a tremendous opportunity here in Thunder Bay, as they realize more value in that plant and put it on the market. I'd ask the member to work with the community, to help attract investors to make sure that this mill goes on to be a strong contributor to the economy of that particular plant.

I'd like to thank my colleagues the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and the Minister of Energy for their co-operation. They have sent a fact-finder to these companies right now, examining what the cogen opportunities are for these companies. Together, we're going to make sure we have a strong northern economy.

1530

PETITIONS

FREDERICK BANTING HOMESTEAD

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Sir Frederick Banting was the man who discovered insulin and was Canada's first Nobel Prize recipient; and

“Whereas this great Canadian's original homestead located in the town of New Tecumseth”—Alliston—“is deteriorating and in danger of destruction because of the inaction of the Ontario Historical Society; and

“Whereas the town of New Tecumseth, under the leadership of Mayor Mike MacEachern and former Mayor Larry Keogh, has been unsuccessful in reaching an agreement with the Ontario Historical Society to use part of the land to educate the public about the historical significance of the work of Sir Frederick Banting;

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

“That the Minister of Culture and the Liberal government step in to ensure that the Banting homestead is kept in good repair and preserved for generations to come.”

I want to thank Larry Whitmore of Loretto for circulating that petition, and of course I’ve signed it in support.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario: “Whereas rebuilding our post-secondary education system is critical to the future of our communities and our province; and

“Whereas high tuition user fees are resulting in massive student debt; and

“Whereas Ontario ranks second-last among all provinces in terms of total PSE budget received from government grants and has the highest percentage of total post-secondary education revenues from private sources; and

“Whereas working and learning conditions must be healthy and safe, because working conditions are learning conditions; and

“Whereas the deferred maintenance cost at Ontario university campuses is estimated to have already reached the \$2-billion mark;

“We, the undersigned, support the Canadian Union of Public Employees’ call on the provincial government to invest sufficient public funds that will:

“(1) Restore public money cut from operating funds since 1995 and bring Ontario up to the national average for funding post-secondary education;

“(2) Finance the \$1.98 billion needed for deferred maintenance; and

“(3) Provide the funding needed to continue the tuition freeze beyond 2006 and increase grants to working-class families.”

I support this petition.

HALTON RECYCLING PLANT

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

“Whereas noxious odours from the Halton recycling plant in Newmarket are adversely affecting the health and quality of life of residents and working people in Newmarket; and

“Whereas local families have lost the enjoyment of their properties for themselves and their children, face threats to their health and well-being and risk a decline in the value of their homes; and

“Whereas for the 300 members of the nearby main RCMP detachment, as well as other workers in the area, the odours are making their working conditions intolerable;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that the Minister of the Environment take immediate action to halt all noxious emissions and odours from the Halton recycling plant, and take all steps necessary to force

Halton Recycling to comply with environmental rules, including closing the plant if the odour problems continue.”

I affix my signature as I am in complete agreement with this petition.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario; and

“Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close Ontario’s three remaining regional centres for people with developmental disabilities, located in Smiths Falls, Orillia and Blenheim, Ontario;

“Whereas the regional centres are home to more than 1,000 disabled adults, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

“Whereas closing the regional centres will have a devastating impact on people with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and the economies of the local communities; and

“Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of the regional centres to extend specialized services, support and professional training to thousands more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep Ontario’s regional centres for people with developmental disabilities open, and to transform them into ‘centres of excellence’ to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live.”

I’m sending it down by way of Owen.

HEALTH CARE SERVICES

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

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the current government has eliminated OHIP coverage for chiropractic services; and

“Whereas the current government has eliminated and reduced OHIP coverage for optometry services; and

“Whereas the current government has eliminated and reduced OHIP coverage for physiotherapy services; and

“Whereas the current government has refused to fund treatment for autistic children even after the courts and human rights commission ruled it should; and

“Whereas the current government has now decided to fund sex change operations, even though the Canada Health Act deems it not an essential health service;

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

"That the government of Ontario does not fund sex change operations and reinstates funding for delisted health services."

I affix my name in full support.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close Ontario's three remaining regional centres for people with developmental disabilities, located in Smiths Falls, Orillia and Blenheim, Ontario;

"Whereas the regional centres are home to more than 1,000 disabled adults, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

"Whereas closing the regional centres will have a devastating impact on people with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and the economies of the local communities; and

"Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of the regional centres to extend specialized services, support and professional training to thousands more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep Ontario's regional centres for people with developmental disabilities open, and to transform them into 'centres of excellence' to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live."

It is signed by people from northern Ontario. I'm in agreement and would affix my signature thereto.

ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): I have a petition here submitted on behalf of Minister Watson. It's from Laurentian High School, J. S. Woodsworth Secondary School, St. Paul's High School, Deslauriers school and Woodroffe High School.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas smoking and exposure to second-hand smoke is the number one preventable killer in Ontario today, and there is overwhelming evidence that retail displays of tobacco products (power walls), in plain view of children and adults, increase the use of tobacco, we have collected ... postcards signed by persons from our

school and community supporting a smoke-free Ontario in 2005 and banning the use of power walls which promote tobacco use.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to make all public places and workplaces smoke-free and to ban the use of power walls. The city of Ottawa has been smoke-free since August 2001. All of Ontario deserves clean air."

I'm very pleased to submit this on behalf of Minister Watson.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I have a petition signed by good citizens of Cambridge.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current government has proposed province-wide legislation that would ban smoking in public places; and

"Whereas the proposed legislation will also prohibit smoking in private, non-profit clubs such as Legion halls, navy clubs and related facilities as well; and

"Whereas these organizations have elected representatives that determine the rules and regulations that affect the membership of the individual club and facility; and

"Whereas by imposing smoke-free legislation on these clubs disregards the rights of these citizens and the original intentions of these clubs, especially with respect to our veterans;

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

"That the Parliament of Ontario exempt Legion halls, navy clubs and other non-profit, private or veterans' clubs from government smoke-free legislation."

I agree with this petition, and sign my name thereon.

HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

I'm in agreement and will affix my signature thereto.

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SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): I have a petition from parents and concerned residents with regard to the pending closure of Ross Mineview school.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Renfrew county district board of education trustees voted March 29, 2005, to close Ross Mineview Public School in September 2005; and

“Whereas the Liberal government promised in their press release of February 17, 2005: ‘Final decisions about changes to operating funds will be made later this spring. Revisions will be made to improve support for small schools, boards with smaller average school size and high declining enrolment jurisdictions. The revisions’ objectives will be to make all schools serving single communities operationally viable’; and

“Whereas Ross Mineview is the only elementary school in the rural community, formerly Ross township (northwest of Renfrew);

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

“To reverse the decision of the Renfrew County District School Board and to provide the funding to keep Ross Mineview Public School open and make it operationally viable.”

I affix my name to this and send it to the table.

HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads:

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

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

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

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

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

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

I agree with this petition. I’ve signed it, and I’m sending it to the Clerk’s table by way of Alexandra.

ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the current government has proposed province-wide legislation that would ban smoking in public places; and

“Whereas the proposed legislation will also prohibit smoking in private, non-profit clubs such as Legion halls, navy clubs and related facilities as well; and

“Whereas these organizations have elected representatives that determine the rules and regulations that affect the membership of the individual club and facility; and

“Whereas imposing smoke-free legislation on these clubs disregards the rights of these citizens and the original intentions of these clubs, especially with respect to our veterans;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly exempt Legion halls, navy clubs and other non-profit, private or veterans’ clubs from government smoke-free legislation.”

I want to thank Edward Beaven, veterans’ services officer of the Royal Canadian Legion, Tottenham Branch 329, for circulating this petition.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR
THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I have another petition similar to the first one from today, but this is from the good people in the Barrie-Orillia-Newmarket-Bracebridge area. It reads as follows:

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

“Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close Ontario’s three remaining regional centres for people with developmental disabilities, located in Smiths Falls, Orillia and Blenheim, Ontario;

“Whereas the regional centres are home to more than 1,000 disabled adults, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

“Whereas closing the regional centres will have a devastating impact on people with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and the economies of the local communities; and

“Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of the regional centres to extend specialized services, support and professional training to thousands more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep Ontario’s regional centres for people with developmental disabilities open, and to transform them into centres of excellence to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live.”

I’m in agreement and would affix my signature thereto.

OPPOSITION DAY

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): I have an opposition day motion on behalf of New Democrats. It reads:

That, in the opinion of this House, the McGuinty government must keep its promises to Ontario children.

Regarding the baby bonus: “We will end the clawback of the national child benefit supplement. The clawback is wrong and we will end it.”

Regarding early learning and child care: “We are committing \$300 million in new provincial money for Best Start.” “We will spend the money offered by the federal Liberals on regulated, centre-based child care.”

Regarding autism treatment: “I believe that the lack of government-funded IBI treatment for autistic children over six is unfair and discriminatory. The Ontario Liberals support extending autism treatment beyond the age of six.” And that the McGuinty government must not appeal the Ontario Superior Court ruling regarding the rights of autistic children to receive this treatment.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Hampton has moved opposition day motion number 2.

Mr. Hampton: New Democrats have brought this motion today because Premier McGuinty, before and during the election campaign, made these promises to children and parents across Ontario. In fact, these promises were widely distributed and repeated over and over again. The McGuinty government said to parents and children that these promises were things that this government would implement. We are now into the second year of the McGuinty government and these promises haven't been fulfilled, and it has created great hardship for children and parents who believed these promises.

I want to deal just briefly with the first promise, the promise to end the clawback of the national child benefit supplement. I want people at home to understand what this is. When I was growing up, as a child, we had something known as the family allowance. The family allowance cheque came every month. A family received a certain amount of money, through the family allowance, per child in the family. In my family, the family allowance was something my mother looked forward to every month. That's when I maybe got a new pair of running shoes, or maybe I got a pair of skates so I could play hockey that year, or maybe I got some new clothes or a winter jacket. The family allowance was very important for virtually all families across Ontario.

In 1997, it was changed to the national child benefit supplement, and something unfortunate happened. The poorest families in Ontario, the lowest-income families in Ontario—families who have to rely upon social assistance or families who have to rely upon the disability support plan—had this money clawed back from them. This money that virtually every family would look

forward to in terms of their children, the McGuinty government clawed back from the lowest-income families.

What does this mean? For those lowest-income families, it means an awful lot. It means, for the first child, taking \$1,500 away from that family. For the second child, it means taking \$1,300 away from that child. For a single-parent mom with two children, it's almost \$3,000 a year that the McGuinty government is clawing back, taking away from those poor kids.

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Recently—we just heard him today—Premier McGuinty tried to pretend that he'd ended the clawback. What this government did was end 3% of the clawback. For a lowest-income family with one child, it means they get one loonie a week and the McGuinty government keeps all the rest. For a low-income family with two children, it means that, thanks to the generosity of Premier McGuinty, they get \$2 a week, a toonie a week, but the McGuinty government keeps all the rest of the money.

I think this is shameful. I think it is shameful to take advantage of people in this way, to make such a promise before the election and not have a plan to implement it, and not implement it.

Then there's the issue of autistic children and IBI treatment for children who suffer the affliction of autism. Let me tell you what is so heartbreaking about this for parents. Parents who are fortunate enough to receive IBI treatment for their children under age six see a dramatic change in their children. For the first time, they see their children able to be communicative. They see their children learn toilet training. They see their children able to interact. They see their children learning to read. They see their children learning to speak and carry on a conversation. They realize that this is very effective treatment for their children.

Premier McGuinty said before the election that it was wrong to eliminate this treatment as soon as a child turns age six. But what did he do right after the election? He forgot about his promise. In fact, this government has spent tens of millions of dollars fighting these parents in court—tens of millions of dollars of public money for the Premier not only to break his promise, but then to go to court to defeat these parents.

Now that the Ontario Superior Court has ruled in favour of these parents, what's the Premier going to do? He's going to spend tens of millions of dollars of public money again to appeal that decision, when the courts have told him he's wrong to break his promise. Not only is he wrong to break his promise; it is dishonest. And it's heartbreaking for these parents for the Premier to do what he has done to them.

Then there's the issue of child care. Go to any community across this province and see the number of parents—he's working, she's working, or she's a single mom and is working to try to support the family—who need access to good-quality, regulated, not-for-profit child care. The Premier said before the election that his government would put \$300 million a year into a child care strategy like that.

What's happened after the election? Has there been \$300 million of provincial money? No. Has there been \$200 million of provincial money? No. Has there been \$100 million of provincial money? How about even \$50 million, \$25 million or \$10 million of provincial money into that child care strategy? No. Nothing.

New Democrats are here today to hold Premier McGuinty accountable and responsible for the promises he made before the election and the promises, now, that he wants to pretend never happened. We're here to hold him accountable for the way in which he's treated these children.

What I think is perhaps the worst situation of all is that it seems as if Dalton McGuinty never, ever intended to keep these promises. There is no plan. There is no strategy. It looks as if these were promises made when the Premier was trolling for votes; these are things that were said to get people to vote for him. But there is no plan, and there is no indication of there ever having been a plan, to implement these promises.

So we are here to hold the McGuinty government and Premier McGuinty accountable for these promises: promises made over and over again to vulnerable children; promises made over and over again to children who live in poverty; promises made to children who need good-quality, not-for-profit, regulated child care, and promises that have been broken day in and day out by Premier McGuinty and his government.

I have several colleagues who want to speak to this resolution. I simply say that I wish we had more members of the McGuinty government here, including the Premier, to address the promises the Premier made.

The Deputy Speaker: I remind the member that you don't refer to anyone's absence, please.

Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): It seems that the government is not interested in debating this at all.

I would like to quote the Premier for what I have to say, because there are people across this province who actually believed the man. There are people who still believe him. This is what he said, in a couple of very poignant sentences that reached a lot of very poor Ontarians: "We will end the clawback of the national child benefit supplement. The clawback is wrong, and we will end it."

Every day in this province there are children who go to bed hungry. Every day in this province there are children who go to school without enough nourishment to allow them to learn. Every day in this province there are children who could be helped if the government lived up to the promises they made during the election.

According to Statistics Canada, there are 373,000 children in Ontario who are living in poverty. That is a shame; that is a disgrace in a province such as ours. Of those, 164,000 have monies clawed back from them and from their families each and every month. To put that in perspective, that's like every single person in a medium-sized town like St. Catharines being discriminated

against by this government. It's like taking a whole section of a population, a whole section the size of the city of St. Catharines, and saying to them, "We're discriminating against you. We are going to make sure that your poor and vulnerable children do not have the food they need, do not have the clothing they need, continue to live in poverty and have a lifestyle that is, from this point on, affected throughout the rest of their lives because they had the temerity, the unmitigated gall to be born into families that had problems: a marital breakup, someone who died or someone who simply could not make it in today's society.

This government says they're doing something about this. I want to remind them that not deducting the 3% recently still lets you keep 97% of the money from the poorest of the poor children.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): That's fair, isn't it?

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Disgusting.

Mr. Prue: That is hardly fairness; that is disgraceful.

There are people in this province who are starting to fight back. There is presently a Hands Off campaign. I think some of the Liberal members may have got the postcards. You may have seen the little boy on the front; his name is Dylan. I want you to think about him when you get that postcard. Dylan, his mother and his sister, Zoë, get a couple of hundred dollars every month, and you take it off him, his mother and his sister every single month. You take \$1,500 from Dylan, and you take another \$1,275 from his sister, Zoë.

Liberals have argued, "We need this money." I'm sure they need money—not this money, but they need money. Other provinces that are poorer than we are are able to live up to the promises they make during election times. New Brunswick promised to end, and not do, the child clawback. New Brunswick has no child clawback. Manitoba recently said they were going to end the clawback and that it was going to take a couple of years. They ended the clawback, and today every single child, the poorest of the poor in Manitoba, gets the federally directed funding that you deny to poor children.

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You make—I guess you're proud of it—\$250 million a year off the poorest, most vulnerable people in this province: our children, those whose parents live on social assistance or the ODSAP. It's \$250 million you could easily get from other sources if you wanted to. Virtually all these same parents who subsist—I say "subsist" because they hardly live—on this pittance of income that is given through social assistance pay no income tax to the province or the federal government. You can't get any money from them from taxation, so you take it in a different way. You take money that is directly owed to them. You take it off them because you can't get it from direct taxation.

If you took that money from the taxation system, the people who could most afford to pay would be the ones who paid. Surely the members of this Legislature, with salaries of \$85,000—I know it's not much—I suggest to

you are in a much better position to pay for this than welfare mums. They are much better able to pay for this than people who are on ODSP. They are much better able to pay for this than Dylan.

Virtually all these families go to food banks. It has been estimated that if you ended the clawback, at least 75% of them would not have to go once a week to the food bank to get their food, to go in and ask for food they cannot afford to buy.

This government has said—they're really magnanimous—that they've ended \$7 million worth of the clawback. That is a pittance. It is one loonie per week per child. That's all it is. You've said that next year, wow, you're going to give \$20 million. The only problem with that is that the federal government's own Web site gives the following information. The federal government's Canada Revenue Agency Web site has the new NCBS rates for July 2005. The annual increase will be between \$211 and \$205, depending on the number of children. If parents on social assistance are able to keep all of that, the total amount of the NCBS flowing through to parents should increase to \$40 million annually. However, this government is only going to give them \$20 million. It appears this government is bound and determined not even to give them next year's amount, which is going to increase, but only half of it.

I grew up in Regent Park. I saw enough, in my early days, of poverty. I saw enough, in my early days, of poor children not having enough to eat, of kids going to school without adequate clothing or with shoes full of holes. I saw enough of kids who didn't have an opportunity to get an education. I saw enough of kids who quit school as soon as they turned 14 or 15 years of age to go out to nonexistent, mindless and mind-numbing jobs. I saw enough of the poverty and hopelessness of their lives that this federal money is supposed to try to stop.

I saw families who needed that money, that baby bonus that came in; mothers who got the money and spent it wisely, whether it was on food, clothing or maybe even a tiny little luxury here and there for their children, so that they could go to school and occasionally go to the museum if their class went to the museum, or have some hot dogs once in a while—we didn't have pizza lunches in those days—when they were brought in, or some milk every once in a while when the school made it available.

That money was never wasted. That money is never, ever wasted. It is used in a good, socially progressive way. This government cannot say the same thing. Although I say good for them for spending some of these ill-gotten gains on social programs, it is hardly affecting the people from whom they are taking the money. It has such a detrimental impact on the poorest of the poor that it is unconscionable that they are not ceasing this horrible policy that they themselves have recognized, that Premier Dalton McGuinty, leading up to the election, recognized, as a social blight upon this province.

I ask the Liberals opposite: If you keep only one election promise—and you're not doing very good yet—

end the clawback. You will do more to alleviate child poverty in this province than any other single measure that you can take: You will help more poor kids to have food, you will help more poor kids to get an education, you will help more poor families to make ends meet, and you will do much more for the social fabric of this province than any other single action you can take. Have the guts to do it. If you have to find the \$250 million by taxing me or taxing rich people more or people who can afford it, then have the guts to do it, because taking the money and the food from Dylan's mouth is the wrong thing to do.

Ms. Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): I'm pleased to have this opportunity to debate this opposition day motion put forth by the member from Kenora-Rainy River. Because of my limited time, my focus is going to be on the autism piece of the resolution.

I welcome the opportunity to set the record straight on facts about the complex nature of the spectrum of autism and the solutions that are needed. The best expert opinion is that there is no single approach to treatment for autism and that treatment for autism must be a flexible, multi-disciplinary approach dealing with the various degrees of severity.

There is an overview on the Autism Society of Ontario Web site. For anybody who is interested, there is more detailed information. It provides an in-depth understanding of the facts, and not just what we sometimes hear here, particularly from Mr. Hampton. It's a simplistic partisan approach that unfortunately too often permeates this Legislature.

"It is estimated that over 20,000 people in Ontario today have autism or some form of pervasive developmental disorder. It's one of the most common developmental disabilities. Yet most of the public, including many professionals in the medical, educational and vocational fields, are still unaware of how autism affects people and how they can effectively work with individuals with autism."

There are several types of autism identified: "In other words, the symptoms and characteristics of autism can present themselves in a wide variety of combinations, from mild to severe. Although autism is defined by a certain set of behaviours, children and adults can exhibit any combination of the behaviours in any degree of severity.... Therefore, there is no standard 'type' or 'typical' person with autism."

Then there is the question about what causes autism. Researchers from all over the world are searching for the answer to this question. To better understand this affliction this government, under Dalton McGuinty, is investing in research and working to develop college and university specialization to train people in autism treatment approaches. This hasn't been done before. Here in Ontario we have set up a research chair on autism at an Ontario university. This initiative will increase the knowledge base and begin to deal with the more complex work to find answers and increase an understanding of this complex disorder called autism, which is showing up in

increasing numbers in our children. I know that Mr. Hampton does not really want to address this or even acknowledge these significant steps. These steps are about the future of how we deal with this ailment.

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities has developed a one-year Ontario college graduate certificate program in autism and behavioural science, because you see, to deal with this, we need qualified individuals.

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This complements and expands the current two-week intensive behavioural intervention in-service training. It was two weeks; that's all it was. We're extending it to a year. When fully implemented, this program is going to provide 245 students each year with specialized skills, including training in IBI. Of course, this is of no consequence because the leader of the third party would have us believe that absolutely nothing is being done in autism. I wish he were here to hear the comments being made about the facts of the situation.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Sarnia-Lambton—

Ms. Martel: That's OK, I'll respond.

The Deputy Speaker: And I don't need the help from Nickel Belt either, but we don't refer to members' absences, please.

Ms. Di Cocco: I apologize.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Nickel Belt, I don't need your help today.

Ms. Di Cocco: As well, there are no medical tests for diagnosing autism. Diagnoses must be based on observations of the individual's communication, behaviour and developmental levels. And these are not my words; these are from Autism Society Ontario. The characteristics of the disorder vary so much that a child should be evaluated by a multi-disciplinary team, which may include a neurologist, a psychologist, a developmental paediatrician, a speech and language therapist, a learning consultant and/or other professional knowledgeable about autism. There's no template, in other words, for a quick diagnosis.

An accurate diagnosis and early identification can provide the basis for building an appropriate and effective educational and treatment program. It's not about one program, it's about a comprehensive approach. We have expanded autism programs for preschool-aged children by more than 25%. It may not be enough for the leader of the third party, but it is certainly moving forward in a very progressive way. We don't have a magic wand and can have it all done yesterday. We had to start from scratch and move forward. We've hired 110 new therapists. We're improving the supports provided to children with autism and we're decreasing the waiting time for assessment. We've decreased that by 72%, from more than 1,000 in March of last year to 287 in March 2005. This is a significant, measured improvement. These are results. Of course, as I say, the leader of the

third party chooses not to give any credit for any of the results because, for him, the sky is always falling in.

In the end the question is, what are the most effective approaches for treatment? Because of the spectrum nature of autism and the many behaviour combinations that can occur—and again, these are not my words; these words are from Autism Society Ontario—no one approach is effective in alleviating symptoms of autism in all cases. The more severe challenges of some children with autism may be best addressed by structured education and behavioural programs, which can contain a one-on-one teacher-to-student ratio or small group environments. However, many other children with autism may be successful in a fully inclusive general education environment with appropriate support.

To be effective, any approach has to be flexible in nature, rely on positive reinforcement, be re-evaluative on a regular basis and provide a smooth transition from home to school. I know the premise of this opposition motion is that there is one solution, and the one solution is all that is important. But we have to look at the whole process. We have to look at the holistic approach in dealing with this matter.

A good program will also incorporate training and support systems for parents and caregivers, which we are doing. Rarely can a family, a classroom teacher or other caregiver provide effective habilitation for a person with autism unless offered consultation or in-service training by an experienced specialist who is knowledgeable about the disability.

We are moving from a system that narrowly focuses only on severe cases to one that deals with the broad spectrum of autism, just as the experts believe is the best approach overall. These supports are newly hired autism consultants—we've hired 75 so far to support children in classrooms—doubling the number of transition coordinators to help children move smoothly from preschool programs into school, and new guidelines which will enable more children to be assessed sooner.

Margaret Spoelstra, executive director of the Autism Society Ontario, said, "Taken together, these supports will go a long way toward removing barriers for children and youth with autism." She went on to say, "These supports will also position Ontario to become a leader in this field, both nationally and internationally." As the minister has stated, we in Ontario today provide the best access to services for autism in North America.

One of the most significant actions that this government has taken, which has obviously been lost on the leader of the third party, is that for the first time we have put into place a ministry for children and youth. It's never been done before. We're the only ones who have done it. A lot of people have talked about it, but we have done it.

We will not be supporting the motion, as it is not about constructive solutions to a significant problem. This government is moving forward with commitments on programs for children and youth as no other government has done before. Therefore, we fundamentally disagree with the premise of the opposition day motion.

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): I intend to address the motion on the floor by focusing on the promise-keeping theme. The leader of the NDP has introduced today a theme that I've certainly discussed at length in this room and a theme that obviously is falling on deaf ears across the way.

Mr. Hampton's motion begins, "That, in the opinion of this House, the McGuinty government must keep its promises to Ontario children." I couldn't agree more, and I certainly extend that beyond children to all Ontarians, children and adults alike, something again that this government does seem loath to do.

We have a track record here of illegal tax hikes, budget tax hikes, deficits in the budget, delisting of health services and how that relates to a march toward two-tier health care, and more recently the better deal for municipalities, a pledge that has been made in recent testimony before the House and in question period and something that has become a bit of a twisted joke over the last week or two. So the list goes on and on. The NDP have made many references this afternoon, and I wish to continue and to broaden that further.

You know, in attempting to impress on this House the importance of keeping promises, I have made reference to cautionary tales. I think a year or so ago I made mention of Honest Abe Lincoln. Pinocchio, of course, is another story, and there's the poem entitled "The Boy Who Never Told a Lie." I don't seem to be getting my message across, and I'd like to try again.

Again, I think of a very well known story about the first President of the United States, George Washington. As we all recall, young George Washington told the truth about chopping down his father's cherry tree. He did that very simply because it was the right thing to do. George's father, according to that story—and I quote the story—indicated to his son, "I'm sorry to have lost my cherry tree, but I'm glad you were brave enough to tell me the truth." That's exactly what people came to believe and expect of the first President of the United States. That is obviously the mantra of Honest Abe Lincoln, and that's exactly what people in Ontario expect of their elected representatives and their leader. They expect the government to be brave enough to make those sometimes tough decisions, especially when one is in government, and to do the right thing, and to hold honesty and keeping promises as a very high priority, no matter what the consequences may be.

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We are discussing broken promises this afternoon. It's a trail that grows longer day by day. It clearly shows that this government is not prepared to make that kind of stand. They won't admit they made some broken promises. We were told last spring that the illegal tax was a health premium; this is the health tax I'm referring to. Very simply, it was a removal of money from people's pockets. Many have come to realize that very recently as they work through their income tax forms or, if need be, sit down with their accountant. This kind of approach truly is not representative of the type of honesty that peo-

ple in Ontario expect. It's certainly not what they would expect from the government they elected a year and a half ago.

Again to take a page from the storybook about George Washington, about Abe Lincoln: Stand up for truth and keep the promises.

I refer back to the 2004 budget. We will have a new budget in the next few weeks. The story of that budget: Instead of beginning with, "Once upon a time in the land of fairy tales," at present we begin with, and I quote Dalton McGuinty, at the time leader of the Liberal Party, before he was Premier: "I ... promise, if my party is elected as the next government, that I will not raise taxes or implement any new taxes without the explicit consent of Ontario voters, and not run deficits. I promise to abide by the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act." This statement was signed by Premier McGuinty in 2003, on September 11. It was just about a year later, after in a sense hoodwinking Ontarians to vote for them for such a pledge, that we find this government defending itself in court on the basis that it doesn't have to tell the truth. The judge seemed to agree with that as well. I find that hard to believe. I think it's sad when people are told by a judge that they don't necessarily need to expect, or perhaps shouldn't expect, their elected representatives to keep their word.

That's the way this government seems to be running its business: telling people one thing, doing another and then hoping no one looks behind the curtain to see if they are telling the truth.

To that end, I can understand why Mr. Hampton's opposition day resolution number 2 leads off, "That, in the opinion of this House, the McGuinty government must keep its promises to Ontario children." I think that is telling. As opposition members as well, we find it is imperative to continue to remind this government to basically do what they said they were going to do. It's really that simple.

Very recently, in my neck of the woods in rural Ontario, people are disenfranchised and really disappointed that this government has turned its back on rural Ontario. Over the last few weeks, we have heard so much about money ostensibly allocated through the CRF. You check the figures and discover it's not there. We've heard this again and again: Brant county took a hit, Elgin county, Norfolk had a decrease of \$7.3 million, Oxford, tobacco towns like Tillsonburg. These communities were promised \$15 million by this government. Two weeks later, \$15.6 million was subtracted. This is how this particular government treats its promises.

Thank you for the time, Speaker.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce): I'm very pleased to rise today to speak on the many new initiatives and programs that this government has introduced over the past 18 months. We understand that our greatest asset is and will continue to be the children of Ontario, and that is why we are working very hard to address the many issues that involve children.

One of the things that I feel we—all Ontarians—should be so proud of is that we have created the

Ministry of Children and Youth Services, the first new ministry in 20 years. I could go on and on about what we have done as a government—and I will—but I just want to give you a few examples from my riding of Huron–Bruce.

We have introduced Best Start. It's a plan for healthy development, early learning and child care during the child's first years. Best Start is an integrated approach that is seamless from the child's and family's perspective, and that brings together pre-school, JK, SK and quality child care; public health; parenting programs; and linkages to many other children's services. The investment of \$58 million in 2004-05 is the first boost to child care in over a decade. It represents a real commitment to early learning. Four thousand new subsidized child care spaces were created. In the riding of Huron–Bruce, Huron county received \$215,600 and Bruce county received \$243,100.

The member mentioned rural communities. We often have a few more difficulties providing the types of services that are needed by our people, so integrated services work very well in our communities.

The province invests funds available from the national child benefit in services and programs for children, including \$20 million in the four-point plan for children's mental health and \$22 million in children's treatment centres. Municipalities also invest available funds in programs like Healthy Babies, Health Children, Ontario Works child care, and Learning, Earning and Parenting.

Simply put, we are providing programming to working families and the most vulnerable from the funds available through the NCB. One of the programs that is offered in Huron county is called Pathways to Self-Sufficiency, and part of the funding comes from the national child benefit supplement. Among the things it covers off are employment maintenance—emergency transportation, minor car repairs—eyeglasses, emergency dental care and emergency child care. It also helps with families: emergency diapers, formula, breast pump rental, infant car seats and emergency homemaking. These are the types of services that are available from the NCB fund in Huron county.

In Bruce county, Bruce Grey Children's Services is another organization in my riding. They offer services for children including mental health services, resources for expectant and new mothers and Early Years centres. These types of programs are vital to our communities.

As well, I want to talk about the free vaccinations for children against pneumonia, chicken pox and meningitis. It's a saving for families of \$600 per child. We have invested \$4 million more for student nutrition programs, bringing the total to \$8.5 million per year. We have provided the first significant increase for children's mental health services in over 12 years. In my riding of Huron–Bruce, this represents an increase of \$308,139 in Bruce Grey Children's Services and \$251,943 for the Huron-Perth Centre for children and youth. At the Huron Safe Homes for Youth, it represents an additional \$25,000. I can tell you that this money will certainly be put to good use in the riding of Huron-Bruce.

1630

Unlike the previous government, we have a plan for school-aged children with autism over the age of six. There are more services now than there have ever been. We have made significant progress in just one year. As of April 1, 2005, we have reduced the waiting list for assessment by 72%.

I know that a number of members from the government want to speak today, but it is certainly my pleasure to rise and talk about the initiatives that we have done. We will continue to work diligently on behalf of the children and families from all of the ridings within Ontario.

Ms. Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke–Lakeshore): I'm pleased to take an opportunity to respond to the opposition day motion this afternoon.

When I travel through my own community of Etobicoke–Lakeshore, one of things that comes across loud and clear from the children's agencies that I have the privilege of representing is that they understand that after years of inaction from a provincial government, with this government, with our Liberal government, children and youth are on the agenda for the very first time in many, many years. Those children and youth have a voice in government like never before. They have a Premier who is so committed to the issue of giving children and youth across Ontario a voice that when he was sworn in, 18 months ago now, one of the first official decisions that was made was to create a new ministry dedicated to children and youth, making sure that Ontario's children and youth are very much on the agenda, helping our government set a path to help Ontario's children achieve the best they can, from before they are born until they are through their school years. Those are the things I want to focus on a little bit.

I recently had an opportunity in my own community to speak to families who depend on an agency called Next Door Family Resources. When I was visiting Next Door Family Resources, I had a chance to talk to them about the new Best Start program, a comprehensive plan that will help kids be ready to start school. It will establish a full day of learning for our four- and five-year olds. When those families in the audience had an opportunity to hear about what the government is doing, I can tell you they too agreed that children and youth are on the government's agenda.

We acknowledge that we can't remedy the disaster we were left with after 10 years of neglect of children and youth issues, but we are moving progressively on many, many fronts. In the short time that I have today I won't even be able to review all the areas where we have seen progress, but I want to highlight some of those areas that were the most significant to families in my own community.

Healthy Babies, Healthy Children: We're investing an additional \$8.3 million to improve access to infant screening programs for more young children. We're investing an additional \$4.7 million in the preschool speech and language program and \$1.2 million in the infant hearing program to improve access to hearing, speech and language programs for more young children.

When I had an opportunity again to go to another wonderful agency in my community that helps children, Lamp Community Health Centre, which has an Early Years centre in it, I talked to the parents who were there with their children, and asked them, “What does this hearing program mean to you? What does it mean, as a young mother, to be able to come in and have your baby’s hearing tested? What does the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program mean?” They told us that this program was important to them. It indicated to them that the government was a partner in raising their children. We’ve heard many sayings about, “It takes a village to raise children.” Well, I can tell you, it takes a government that is committed to helping parents across this province raise their children into healthy adults. That’s what our government is doing, each and every day, in a variety of areas.

To have statements made that our Premier is not committed to this issue, when he has put a minister who—last week I had an opportunity to speak to Minister Dryden, who is so committed to this issue. He sang her praises. He said, “There could be nobody better at the table helping me, working with me, to ensure that we get this national child care program.”

Ontario is leading the way with the three sites that are coming on board and with the wraparound systems. For those families in our province who have had the benefit of having wraparound day care in a school, to help them in the busy lives that they have trying to raise their children, it is critical. My own sister has benefited in raising her children through wraparound child care. She could not have been able to raise wonderful children, pursue her career and live a balanced life without the support that she has received from wraparound child care.

Shouldn’t every parent in this province have access to that kind of support? Our government says they should, and we are moving forward each and every day to make sure. We’re going to build our pilot projects. We would have loved to put one in every community across the province, but we are not able to move that quickly on all fronts. We’re going to start three pilot projects with a goal to provide child care in this province like never before.

One of the other areas that is significant in my own community—there are some wonderful agencies doing work in this field—is children’s mental health. Children’s mental health, unfortunately, has been very far off the radar screen for the last 10 years. We have seen now a 3% increase in funding for children’s mental health agencies to retain and recruit staff. In January 2005, in Toronto alone, \$1.9 million went to 63 agencies, and \$13 million went to create 113 new children’s mental health programs and expand 96 existing programs across the province. Some of those programs operate every day, assisting those children and youth in our communities who need help the most.

I want to recognize the good work done by the agencies in my own community, Etobicoke. The Etobicoke

Children’s Centre—trauma-based treatment and training—received an additional \$50,000, a recognition of the importance of this for the first time in many years. Toronto Child Abuse Centre received an additional \$86,000. The George Hull Centre, a wonderful organization in Etobicoke, received an additional \$26,000 for a family conferencing group and an additional \$55,000 for increased services for adolescent and concurrent disorders.

Over the years, I’ve had a chance to learn a lot about the financial difficulties that the George Hull Centre had been through with the previous government. Let me tell you, it was a real benefit to see that agency receive support. They very much appreciated the fact that our government cares about children whom previous governments, frankly many governments, have not really cared about, because they are potentially those children who are difficult to deal with—difficult issues. But those children are not going to be forgotten by this government.

Other children who will not be forgotten by this government are those who require our protection. I had the privilege of being with Minister Bountrogianni when she announced the closure of the Toronto Youth Assessment Centre in my community, which was an unsuitable and unsafe institution for our youth in this province. Now we are moving forward again to protect those youth who are at risk and who are most vulnerable, creating a new GTA youth centre to ensure community safety and provide appropriate youth programming.

The day I walked through TYAC with the minister was a difficult day, I can tell you. It was difficult to watch the type of environment that these youth were in, these young adults whom we want to see get out of this institution at some point and become adults who are able to prosper in our society. It was not suitable. It was a proud day that our government finally moved on the closure of this facility. Again, that’s another program in Etobicoke.

I am proud to say that this government is committed to ensuring the protection of children and youth. With that, I’m pleased to cede the floor to my colleagues, because there is so much more we can say to indicate the commitment of this government to protect children and youth in our province and to ensure their prosperity in years to come.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate. I had two stand up at the same time. The member for Hamilton East.

1640

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I thought I would start by reiterating the motion, particularly the piece of the motion that I’m going to be speaking to, because I think it’s extremely specific and extremely important:

“Opposition Day Number 2

“Mr. Hampton

“That, in the opinion of this House, the McGuinty government must keep its promises to Ontario children...”—and I’m going to speak to this section—“Regarding early learning and child care: ‘We are com-

mitting \$300 million in new provincial money for Best Start.’ ‘We will spend the money offered by the federal Liberals on regulated, centre-based child care.’”

I thought it was pretty obvious that the speakers from the government side have done us a great favour. They clearly, in their rhetoric, indicated that they can’t speak to that motion because, guess what? They are not doing what they said they were going to do. They are not spending the \$300 million that they said they were going to spend, and that’s the bottom line. What I would like to do is talk about why it’s important that they actually live up to their commitment, that the McGuinty Liberals actually do what they said they were going to do and start dealing with, in a real and tangible way, the child care issues of the families in this province.

Did you know that there are 1,944,400 children in the province of Ontario under the age of 12? Did you know that almost 70% of those children—it’s a staggering number, almost 70% of the children under 12 in this province, 1,325,400 children—have mothers who are in the workforce in Ontario? In fact, the number of children needing child care since 1995 has increased by 75,400. However—and this is the disturbing issue and the reason why it is extremely important that the government live up to its promise—only 25,045 spaces have been created since 1995, which means that there is a huge gap between the need for regulated child care spaces and the number that are being provided in Ontario. That is the crux of the matter. There are 91% of children under 12 in Ontario who cannot access regulated child care spaces. In this day and age, in the year 2005, that’s absolutely unacceptable and absolutely inappropriate, particularly when, well into its term of office, the government that promised to address this very travesty has not done so, has not done what it said it was going to do in regard to providing regulated child care in the province.

I spent some time recently, at the beginning of March, in my home community of Hamilton talking to people who had come out to have a public meeting about the child care issue. It was a meeting that was organized by the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, and there were women there who had been fighting for and advocating for a system of early learning and care in the province of Ontario since the 1980s, people like a woman named Lesley Russell, people like Dr. Jean Clinton, people like Inez Rios, who is the executive director of our immigrant women’s centre in Hamilton, people like LaFerne Clarke from family services, people like Laurie Jeandron. Those are the people in Hamilton. And I know that this coalition went across the province talking to community after community after community about the concerns they had about the lack of regulated, affordable, not-for-profit child care, quality child care and early learning in their communities.

The people who showed up in Hamilton were women who work in this field. Some of them were women who were training in this field, early childhood education at Mohawk College. These are women who are passionate about their field, passionate about children, passionate

about providing the very important, integral part of the development of children from the very early ages. They were women, in fact, who want to stay in that field over the long term. But they were also women who wanted to make sure that in participating in that field, they would be receiving the kind of remuneration that they deserve for providing that very, very important service. They were people who were talking about how important it is to make sure that they were able to continue to learn and grow within their field and provide the necessary input and education and support and developmental programs for children in their very early years. In fact, these were women who were very, very hopeful that this government and this minister would take up the challenge and be a true leader in the child care fight for families and children in Ontario. They are women who are experts in the field. They are people who know the research. They are people who have studied the models and who are very well versed in the options and opportunities before us at this historic time.

Of course, that’s all relative to what’s happening on the federal scene, but that’s another story. These are women, within this context, who were bitterly disappointed a few short weeks later when they found out that the minister had been stringing them along for all this time. They were bitterly disappointed to find out that they had been misled for months because the test of integrity, once again, was failed by the McGuinty government. In true McGuinty Liberal form, the minister broke her promise to children, to families and to the child care community.

I can say this with authority, because the minister in fact was provided with an outline of the problems in her purported plan. I don’t quite see it as a plan. It’s so long-term that it can’t be called a plan; it’s so nebulous that you can’t even refer to it as a plan. I would think that “plan” in the dictionary would be more succinct than what this minister has offered with regard to a child care program for Ontario. It’s very saddening indeed, because the minister spent much time in this very chamber, and with the media, I might add, in Ontario, with the press gallery touting her plan, only for all of us to find out that we were duped. The minister was reminiscent of the famous children’s novel of the emperor who had no clothes. I have to say that that was quite a disappointing time.

What’s wrong with what is being called the Best Start program? The bottom line is that it’s a non-starter, and that’s the first critical problem. The minister said that the program she was putting forward was going to be a seamless service, that it would be a seamless program. But the fundamental flaw is that the minister doesn’t get the fact that we’re talking about early learning and care. When you talk about a seamless program, you’re talking about the fact that integrated into your program is the acknowledgement that early learning, that learning, is a basis for everything going forward from age zero. What we have is a minister who has put forward a plan that deals with a system that does not recognize that basic

principle. That is an extremely major problem with the very premise of what she put forward in her Best Start program. Basically, it perpetuates the separation between learning and care, and that is a fundamental flaw.

There are a number of other problems. I'm going to review them one by one, hopefully leaving quite a bit of time for my colleague, who has other issues to discuss in regard to this motion.

Best Start does not commit to the fundamental issue of universality. For New Democrats that is extremely important, and people who are very involved in child care programs would agree that universality is a fundamental requirement. This program does not commit to that, and that is a travesty. Best Start is silent on early learning and care needs of children under the age of 12, and that's very interesting, because the minister brags about her program but refuses to acknowledge that, except for a couple of pilot projects, she has totally ignored everyone from ages zero to four, and from age six and over. How is this a program for children in Ontario universally when from zero to 12 it's not? It's a program at this point, at the very, very best for a few kids ages four and five, maybe sometime in 2007 if it actually gets implemented. That's a problem.

1650

There are many problems. The minister refuses to commit to two fundamental concerns. One is for expansion only in the not-for-profit sector, which again is a fundamentally important issue. Research shows time and again that the highest quality, best bang for your buck is not-for-profit, and this minister refuses to make that commitment. Also, the plan that was brought forward by the minister, the nebulous piece of a plan she brought forward, does not at all talk about the QUAD principles, which should be the building blocks to any child care program, whether that's the national program or the provincial program. The QUAD principles—quality, universality, accessibility and developmental—must be up front and centre in any program. The minister has not done that.

These things cause great concern in the child care community. These are the reasons—as well as the fact that this government has refused to invest the dollars they said they were going to invest—that we have put this motion forward today. We need the government to live up to its promises and do the right thing by the children of Ontario.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'm pleased to join in this debate. I want to say at the outset that I will be voting in support of this motion put forward by Mr. Hampton for a very clear reason. The motion reads, "That, in the opinion of this House, the McGuinty government must keep its promises to Ontario children." Speaker, I'm sure you would agree with me that this government has a reputation for not keeping its promises. Whether it is to children, to seniors, to businesses or to the social service sector, there is such an incredible track record of broken promises and broken trust by this Premier and by this government. I believe this debate

gives us an opportunity to make it very clear to people in this province just what the impact of those broken promises is, and how empty so much of the rhetoric we get from this government really is, how hollow many of the words we hear from cabinet ministers and from this Premier really are.

We heard, even in this debate, in the response from one of the members of the government, how this government takes pride in the fact that they have created a new ministry for children and youth. Yet when we look at the record, we see that this new ministry is really simply one new bureaucratic way of sidestepping the responsibilities this government has to children in this province, one more minister to write one more letter that does not address the issue when there is an appeal by parents, whether it's for autism or other issues. So the creation of a ministry is not the answer; the answer is to respond in a practical way to the promises made to the children of this province.

For the record, I want to read a portion of a letter that was sent by Dalton McGuinty. It was dated September 17, 2003. It was addressed to Ms. Morrison, and it reads as follows: "Sadly, as you and many other Ontario families are experiencing first-hand, far too few autistic children in our province are getting the help and support they so desperately need." He says, "I also believe that the lack of government-funded IBI treatment for autistic children over six is unfair and discriminatory. The Ontario Liberals support extending autism treatment beyond the age of six." He goes on to say, "In government, my team"—this is the team we are now listening to today justifying why they are not doing what Dalton McGuinty said he was going to do—"and I will work with clinical directors, parents, teachers and school boards to devise a feasible way in which autistic children in our province can get the support and treatment they need. That includes children over the age of six."

It's signed, "Dalton McGuinty, Leader of the Ontario Liberal Party." That's the same Dalton McGuinty who today is the Premier and has his team, his team that is now refusing to live up to those promises that were made.

I have had—as I'm sure every member of this House has—visits over the last number of months and years from parents of autistic children who are simply asking for one thing, and that is that their children be given an opportunity to grow and develop. It's not as though this is new treatment; it's not as though a treatment is not available; it is. It's being delivered.

I'm proud of the fact that our government was the first government to actually introduce formal treatment into the province of Ontario for children with autism, paid for by the government of Ontario. It started off with a \$5-million investment, increased by another \$35 million, increased by millions more. It was a beginning. It was an important start.

What parents are asking now is for Dalton McGuinty, who, when he was wanting to be Premier, made a promise to them—not a conditional promise. His letter did not say, "depending on what the books of the

province are; depending on whether or not we can afford this"; he clearly made the statement that this was a priority for him and it would be a priority for this government. He made the statement that he and his team will provide treatment to children with autism beyond the age of six. As the official opposition, we are today calling on the Premier of this province, on the government of the day, to keep his promises.

I found it shocking that in this very Legislature, just last week, when the Premier was put a question in this House by Ms. Churley, he did not hesitate at all. There was no equivocation at all about his response. I want you to contrast this question with the question that is being put to him through this motion. The question Ms. Churley put to him—and this is regarding the issue of sexual reassignment surgery, whether government would fund a sex-change operation. Ms. Churley said this: "I ask you, if the tribunal rules in favour of reinstating funding, will you ensure that your government respects the ruling and reinstate the funding immediately after that ruling?" Mr. McGuinty responded this way: "I want to be very, very direct to the member's question: Yes."

Isn't it interesting that he is very quick to say yes in response to that question, but when the Superior Court of Ontario directs this same government, this same Premier, to provide funding for autistic children, he has refused to even answer that question in this place? He doesn't have the moral courage to stand in this place and respond; the best he can do is refer the question to his Attorney General. This is cowardice at its worst, it is immoral and it shows a bankruptcy on the part of this government, not in terms of finances but in terms of moral fibre and character.

So I call on Premier McGuinty, on this government, to simply do what he said he would do: honour his commitment. That's why I will be voting for this motion.

1700

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): I welcome the opportunity to make a few comments today on the opposition day motion that we are debating. I think that one of the important things about this particular opposition motion is that, as it characterizes the government, it provides an opportunity for us to look at some of the enemies of democracy. I think that the two most important for all people in today's society are cynicism and apathy. What we are looking at today provides an example that can be used to demonstrate that both of these, cynicism and apathy, will grow with the kind of criticism that is inherent in this motion.

We know that apathy grows out of a sense of confusion, a sense of conflict, and from that develops a sense of incompetence. When you look at the kinds of things that are built into this motion, I think it's obvious that the public is going to feel the kind of turnoff, the kind of response that we know comes out of the confusion that develops that apathy.

In the same way, we can talk about the cynicism that is also inherent in the issues raised by this motion. Cynicism is going to happen when government doesn't

do what it says it will do, when it doesn't live up to the promises it makes. We are certainly very much aware of the kind of record that this government has made for itself. It has broken many, many promises.

I think it's important to understand how that connection is made and what effect it has on voter apathy and voter cynicism. We know that, at the time of the campaign in 2003, the Premier—at that point the leader—indicated that he would not raise taxes. This is something that obviously was a key message for voters. Voters want to know that they can expect to have a certain style of government, and they make decisions based on the kinds of things that are brought forward during a campaign.

I don't think that people had any idea of the speed with which those promises would be broken. Certainly the one that stands out in the area of taxes is the so-called health tax. At first, the government tried to present this as a health premium, but we all know that it was neither health nor premium; it was a tax. Given that it is not designated to the health budget—it is part of the government's revenue—we have here a clear indication of the fact that the government, in its infancy, broke one of the foundations of its platform.

It's interesting to note too the fact that, because it was such an integral part of the government's position, it was one of the events that the now Premier made a great public display of. It's interesting to look at the fact that, with some flourish, McGuinty signed the written pledge during the 2003 election campaign as he stood with the president of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, John Williamson, who signed as a witness. This wasn't something that was treated as an off-the-cuff, not-thought-out position; in fact, it was one that clearly the now government regarded as an important key in their election platform. But very quickly, it was gone, the same as hydro rates, again a commitment the now government made. So people began to have that kind of disillusionment, which does go to the issues of apathy and cynicism.

The now Premier also made a commitment—it is one of the key foundations of the motion we are debating here—in a letter that was dated September 17, 2003, in which he identified the importance of IBI treatment. In fact, he said, "I also believe that the lack of government-funded IBI treatment for autistic children over six is unfair and discriminatory." But we have seen that when it came to actually providing that care, the government has been unable to provide that and, I would say, has waged war through the courts with the families so affected. Again, I think it is a reflection of the kind of activity by the party in power that goes to the issue of that kind of cynicism.

We also have witnessed the breaking of promises with regard to necessary health care. Ontarians woke up to find that physiotherapy, chiropractic care and optometry were also parts of a disposable platform that the party had campaigned on.

I think we have to take into account, when we are looking at this motion—obviously there are very specific

parts of this motion that reference has been made to, but I think, overall, the important point for people to understand, as voters, is the danger of the kind of government that is unable to meet what it has set forward for itself, in terms of the promises it makes. What this demonstrates is that not only has the government broken many, many of its promises, including the ones listed in this motion, but it has no plan. And this speaks not only to the reaction of voters in being cynical and apathetic, but to the government's incompetence as well.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Jim Flaherty (Whitby–Ajax): Thank you, Speaker.

Interjection.

Mr. Flaherty: I thank the minister of consumer and commercial relations, although they change the names often, so I'm not quite sure—the minister in charge of wine in restaurants.

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): And elevators.

Mr. Flaherty: Yes, and elevators.

Mrs. Munro: Also cemeteries.

Mr. Flaherty: And the minister also responsible for cemeteries in Ontario; it's good that he's here.

I'll say a few words about this opposition day motion, particularly with respect to services for vulnerable people—people with disabilities—in the province of Ontario. This is a strange day in Canadian politics, where we have the Prime Minister making some kind of negotiated pact, I understand, with the leader of the New Democratic Party. In fact, the only politician in Canada whom the Prime Minister seems not willing to make a deal with is the Premier of Ontario, Dalton McGuinty. We'll see if that happens in the next week or so, as we're into let's-make-a-deal politics, at least at the federal level.

1710

It's about integrity in government, isn't it? This government in Ontario, when it was seeking office, said—the Premier today said that he would keep his commitment to the parents of children with autism, a very serious commitment to make, and an issue that's not without difficulty in the sense that what the parents are seeking has a substantial financial consequence. It costs a significant amount of money to advance this program to an older age group. But the fact is that, in terms of integrity in government, Mr. McGuinty chose to make that commitment, and of course he should keep that commitment.

When I look at some of the other commitments that were made that have been abandoned, the promises that have been broken by Mr. McGuinty, I have less concern, actually, about them than I do about a specific promise like this, with respect to which many parents based their vote. They actually have said that they voted for Mr. McGuinty, that they voted for their local Liberal candidate because of this commitment, which isn't surprising when one thinks about the crisis in families, the deep-felt needs in families, the realistic needs in families with children with significant disabilities and challenges.

In support of this opposition day motion, I urge the government to fulfill that commitment to children with autism and to their parents in Ontario. Promises made, promises broken: This promise should be kept and I urge the government to do that.

There are choices that are made in government, and I would be the first to acknowledge them. When I had the privilege to serve as Minister of Finance, I can remember preparing the budget in 2001. A number of people advocated, in social services certainly, that we should increase the benefit under the Ontario disability support program. Another claim was for children's treatment centres, which had been chronically underfunded to the tune of about \$20 million at that time; for workers who worked with young people and adults with mental disabilities, with intellectual challenges, who had not kept up in their salary grid with persons who worked with other persons with other types of disabilities.

Those were just some of the issues, and we made choices. We provided the additional funding to the 19 children's treatment centres across the province—20 now, I believe. We provided the funding for persons who worked with young people and adults with mental disabilities, and we did not make some other choices, because that's the obligation of government.

I say to my friends opposite that this obligation with respect to this extended treatment program for children with disabilities is fundamentally important, particularly when I look at Ontario's finances and we put in perspective the kind of money that is being talked about here compared to the kind of money that is being spent by this government. In 2001 the spending of the Ontario government was about \$65 billion. We don't know what the spending has been in the past fiscal year; we'll find out when the budget comes forward in the next little while in Ontario. The best guess is that the spending is something in excess of \$80 billion—staggering spending by this government. This is a government that now goes, hat in hand, to Ottawa and says, "Bail us out from our budget challenges in Ontario."

I say to the Liberal government that to be credible they must first get their own fiscal house in order. As they say in law, "He who seeks equity must do equity." Get the spending under control, get on to a plan in the province, and then the supplication to Ottawa will be much more powerful on behalf of the people of Ontario.

It's not clear what the spending increase has been in the past year. We'll know when the budget comes forward. It's at least 6% or 7%, perhaps in excess of 10%. We don't even know. This is in an economy growing at 2.5%, 3% or 3.1%, clearly not sustainable by a provincial government, not sustainable, for that matter, without substantial deficits and increasing public debt by any government.

I urge the members opposite to urge the Minister of Finance and the Premier to bring in a budget in Ontario that has a plan, and then stick to the plan that leads to a balanced budget. That's what happened last year in the budget, in this budget. In the economic statement in fall

2004, on virtually every page there was talk about the four-year economic plan, the fiscal plan for the province of Ontario, “our plan.” At some point in here it’s called—yes, here it is on page 1. In the first paragraph of the economic statement by the Minister of Finance in the autumn of 2004, he says, “I want to talk about a comprehensive four-year plan.” The government, we know, is way off-plan. They are way off-plan on spending, because of ad hoc spending decisions that were not budgeted. They are way off-plan because of settlements that have been reached with public sector workers and broader public sector workers that are in excess of budgeted items.

They are way off-balance on something else too, and that’s on the revenue side, because this government brought in the largest single tax hike in the history of the province of Ontario in last year’s budget, including substantial corporate tax hikes. We haven’t heard it in this place, but the word is out there now in financial circles in Ontario that the revenue from the corporate tax hike anticipated by the Minister of Finance and by the Premier not only has not materialized but is substantial lower. We know why it’s substantially lower, because we understand Canada somewhat. We understand that a corporation doing business in various parts of Canada can book profits outside the province of Ontario and pay corporate taxes in another province, and not in this province, totally legally—some would say an intelligent business decision by a corporation.

You’d think the Minister of Finance and the Premier would have picked that up. You’d think they would have come clean already with the people of Ontario about the diminished revenue from anticipated, expected revenues from that corporate tax hike that are not materializing. But we’ll hear about that. We’ll see that when we see the numbers fairly shortly, I hope, in the budget.

But going back to the basic point of this opposition day motion: I urge the government to keep this promise to parents of children with autism in this province. At least keep this pledge. It’s the decent thing to do out of respect for the lives and the challenges of these parents and these children in Ontario.

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): Notwithstanding the sometimes acerbic tone that’s around this discussion, I’m always really gratified and pleased when the discussion in this House focuses on something very substantive, and children are number one on my hit parade.

One of the things that we cannot emphasize enough, first and foremost, is that this government spoke volumes about its consideration of children, the importance of children, the importance of nurturing children and providing them the best we could provide them with, when we created the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. For the first time in this province there is a ministry, an entire ministry, dedicated to children and youth services. I think it also has to be said that the selection of the minister for that ministry was particularly brilliant. Dr. Marie Bountrogianni grew up above a child care centre.

Her mother was in child care. She is a child psychologist. She worked for the school boards for many, many years. She had a dream all those years when she was in the school boards, and that dream was to create the best possible start for young children so that they would have the support and the nurturing and the early learning they needed to set themselves up for life. She has been put into a position where she can achieve that dream, realize that dream.

This is where I felt a little bit like I was in the twilight zone for a minute: I was at the launch of the Best Start program a month ago or so and I heard first-hand, in a room filled with early childhood educators and school board officials and children’s aid officials, the details of what the Best Start program was all about. I’ve heard in this House a little earlier that we weren’t delivering on all sorts of issues, when clearly the Best Start program delivers in an historic way in this province. For the first time in this province there is a program for young children, early learning that nurtures them and takes into consideration a whole range of issues that families face.

1720

First of all, I want to talk about the fact that this fall, junior and senior kindergarten children will have access to an affordable, quality early learning program that will wrap around their school day. It will be in the school setting or very nearby. That’s sensible, because parents want to go to a place that’s close or where they have other children. It’s a little more convenient: They can drop off their older school-aged children as well as the younger ones. If parents are working, there is an arrangement that those children will be moved back to the school setting and back to the child care setting. It’s a pretty sensible thing; it’s creating hubs.

Over the next 10 years, that program is going to be expanded to include a half day of learning for children as young as two and a half years old, again largely in the school setting where it’s easiest for the parents. There is also going to be a wide range of supports for parents and their younger children, like ongoing screening for newborns, an 18-month well baby checkup and early identification of hearing and language needs.

They’ve also set up three demonstration sites. Three areas in the province will get the entire Best Start program right away, so that the province can assess the success of the program and fine-tune it before rolling it out all over the province. One of those areas, I’m delighted to say, takes in part of my riding and part of Hamilton East, and it will service those kids. So they are going to get the full program right away. It’s just economically sensible that you do have demonstration sites where you can assess the success of a program and fine-tune it before you spend the money rolling it out all over the place. That’s sensible. It’s nice to talk about what we should all be doing, but it’s also really sensible to talk about what we can do and get on with doing it. That’s exactly what has happened here.

I want to take a look at a couple of the quotes I’ve heard. The day in my riding when they were unveiling

the Best Start program, I heard nothing but accolades and the atmosphere was absolutely jubilant. I'm going to read some of the quotes from that day.

First of all, from Margaret McCain, who is the co-author of the 1999 Ontario Early Years report: "This program is a fulfillment of everything we envisioned in 1998 with our Early Years Study. This was our vision and hope for Ontario, and indeed Canada."

From Jane Bertrand, who is at the Atkinson Centre, human development and applied psychology, at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, OISE: "The framework is there for transformation to happen. This is the best thing that has happened since McCain and Mustard issued their Ontario Early Years Study, 1999. Finally, the key recommendations of their report are on the road to being implemented."

From Rick Johnson, association president, Ontario Public School Boards' Association: "The Ontario Public School Boards' Association applauds the provincial government's announcement on early learning and child care that is based on the four key principles of quality, universality, accessibility and development. We welcome the opportunity to work with Minister Bountrogianni and the provincial government to ensure that this investment in our children during their early years will form for them the foundation of a healthy and successful life."

From David Miller, mayor of the city of Toronto: "We're pleased that the province is listening to what Toronto and other cities have said about child care and early learning."

From Sue Makin, healthy families director, child health, city of Toronto: "Public Health absolutely supports the integrated service approach in the Best Start plan. Public Health is particularly pleased that this government has included Healthy Babies, Healthy Children, preschool speech and language, infant hearing and the 18-month screen as part of their integrated service approach. Bravo, Dr. Bountrogianni!"

From Mary Jean Gallagher, director, Greater Essex County District School Board: "This is a comprehensive plan to develop a stimulating learning environment that will prepare children for learning. It levels the playing field for all children and will provide a one-stop point for preschool children."

Finally, Jean Clinton, who is a child psychiatrist and somebody who has studied these issues tremendously, and is a great champion of the Reggio Emilia model, which is internationally renowned, says of the Best Start plan that was announced by this government: "This is a huge support for parents.... It's so exciting because the overall vision would be that all children have the right to the environment they need for full growth."

There are more quotes that I could go on and read. So I'm a little confused when I hear we're not delivering on a promise, when we clearly are delivering on a promise, and delivering what is historic in nature. This has never happened before.

I'm just going to go over a few more points so we're absolutely clear. In addition to this, we've also created

4,000 new subsidized child care spaces. We've made more families eligible for child care subsidies by eliminating restrictions on RRSPs and RESPs. We're investing an additional \$8.3 million in the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program to improve access to the infant screening program for more young children. We're investing an additional \$4.7 million in the preschool speech and language program, and \$1.2 million in the infant hearing program to improve that situation.

So it's all here. I think it's a great program. No, we're not going to do it all overnight, but we have a very clear plan. Everything is there. Stakeholders are being consulted. They're cheering us on wildly, and I think that speaks volumes.

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to rise and speak to this opposition day motion. I'd like to begin by spending a bit of time on the autism issue and what we found when we came into office.

The Tories had agreed to fund an IBI treatment program for preschool autistic children; that is, up to age six. Interestingly, I was rather surprised when I heard the comments from the member for Oak Ridges, who seemed to be saying that he now opposed this, because it was actually the Tories who, based on some research, originally opposed the cut-off age of six and entered into the court case over this issue. So I was a little bit surprised by the comments from the member for Oak Ridges. Nevertheless, we found there was an IBI program that was met with great favour by the parents of preschool autistic children; in fact, there was a significant waiting time for this program.

When you look at what the Provincial Auditor had to say, because the Provincial Auditor took a close look at this program, he found that what we ran into was a huge waiting list both for assessment and treatment, and that this was a very costly program. Depending on the region, it cost as much as \$100,000 per child to deliver this program. So things were not all happy when we came in.

I think it's worthwhile to tell folks a little bit about the program. IBI stands for intensive behavioural intervention. It's a one-to-one therapy and typically goes on for 20 to 40 hours per week. This is a very intensive therapy, although interestingly, the providers only require about two weeks of training. It's a very intensive therapy, and thereby the reason it is very expensive.

This is a subset of a larger group of treatments known as ABA, or applied behaviour analysis. The terminology gets a little bit confusing here. The other thing that gets a little bit lost here sometimes is that not all autistic children benefit from this program. There are some children who certainly benefit from this therapy, but there are other children who are also autistic who quite frankly don't particularly qualify, because autism is a whole spectrum, a whole range of services.

It's interesting; I had a family in my office not too long ago who have two autistic children, and they said to me, "You know, Liz, the older child who is autistic is quite high-functioning. We understand that IBI is not an

appropriate intervention for our older son who is autistic. There are some interventions that would be very helpful to our older son, but those interventions aren't available in Guelph. If I lived in Waterloo, I could get those interventions, but because I live in Guelph, I can't get that treatment. The treatment that my older autistic child needs isn't available."

The other thing they noted, though, was that they had a younger autistic child, and this child was quite different. The younger child, the three-year-old, in fact would benefit greatly from IBI treatment. The treatment that this child requires might be available eventually, but this child is on a very long waiting list.

1730

It was interesting what those parents said to me. They said, "Liz, we fully support you in ending this service at age six, because we understand that what we need to provide as a province is a range of services for autistic children so that both of our children can benefit. We understand that what we need, according to the research, is effective IBI intervention for our three-year-old now, not our six-year-old later. So we support what you're doing."

In fact, we've done quite a lot on this file. First of all, we have made significant progress in just one year. As of April 1, 2005, we have reduced the waiting list for assessment, which was a significant issue according to the Provincial Auditor, by 72%. We've hired over 110 new therapists, and because of that we've increased the number of children receiving IBI services by over 25% and therefore reduced the waiting time for this service. We've doubled the number of transition coordinators from 13 to 26 to help children move on, and we've also introduced a new program in schools which provides autism experts on every board to make sure that we can provide service to school-aged children.

Just before I wrap up, I'd like to quote briefly a few of the experts. World-renowned autism expert Peter Szatmari, who is the acting director at the Offord Centre for Child Studies, a highly respected centre in the area of special-needs children, said, "It's a significant and positive step in the right direction."

Gordon Floyd, executive director for Children's Mental Health Ontario, said, "I am in complete support of this program. The minister clearly understands the challenges facing children, youth and their families living with autism."

I am voting against this motion because we are producing great programming for kids.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The member for—Burlington. I don't know why that escaped me.

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): You only pass through it on the way to your wonderful riding on almost a daily basis, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, I want to thank my colleague for tabling this motion today and providing all of us with an opportunity to participate in an important debate on the future of children's services in this province. I was quite floored by the comments made by the member from Guelph

indicating that she'd be voting against a resolution that asks her to keep her word. I guess that in one fell swoop she has indicated, to her constituents in Guelph at least, that she no longer stands by that and perhaps the more than three election promises which were contained in this resolution and which formed part of the rather lengthy list of 241 promises made by Dalton McGuinty in order to acquire the premiership and the government of Ontario.

I'm very disturbed at the revisionist history coming from the member from Guelph, given the fact that our government did bring in the first major IBI-intensive autism program in Canada. We're very proud of that. I've been here 20 years, and no one ever talked about autism 20 years ago. It's a relatively newly identified challenge over the last decade; the science, and therefore the therapies, are rather contemporary. So I was again very disturbed when the member from Guelph read into the record letters of two years ago: comments made by the current minister of children, Ms. Bountrogianni, who in those days actually upheld the science, confirmed the science and tapped upon her vast professional experience as an educator and psychologist with the Hamilton Board of Education as to how important the program was.

Perhaps it's because the member from Guelph was not in the House or not paying attention when I asked that very same minister why she wasn't proceeding based on a court case in this province, saying that we must proceed with autism supports, that in fact the learned judge indicated that it is the sole responsibility of the province of Ontario to provide these services. The minister stood in her place and answered in this House, on the Hansard record of this Legislative Assembly, that she did not believe that the science could uphold the fact that those services are applicable and would have the effect of positive treatment for children past the age of six.

I was absolutely floored by that statement. Here is a learned, degreed child psychologist who was on the record, having read a court transcript that says that it's now the province's responsibility to provide IBI treatment—she now stands in her place and says that this isn't an essential, proven treatment for children in this province, yet she knew that when she and the current Comsoc minister and the Premier himself routinely stood in his place in this House on this side of the House, trotting families and their children through this legislative chamber week after week after week, saying that when he became Premier, he would provide these extended services.

I just marvel at the government members who are prepared to formally declare to the children of this province and their parents that they have no intention of honouring this promise. There has to be a whole series of reasons for that. My colleague Mr. Flaherty has put on the record that it's probably their spending priorities. Three years ago, spending for provincial programs was \$65 million. It's now well over \$80 million, and this is not part of their priorities. What little bit of money that was earmarked for children in the autism program up to

age six is now being siphoned off and redirected to Ontario's Minister of Education, Mr. Gerard Kennedy, who will pick up substantive millions of dollars—not to provide direct services to autistic children, which is the principle we should be keeping our eye on, that we should drive resources to the delivery mechanism to provide the supports to autistic children and their families; no, no. This money is going to assist teachers so they can better cope in a classroom. I know exactly where the money's going to go. It's going to pair up additional teaching assistants to relieve the pressure from teachers in the classroom. That is not IBI, intensive behavioural intervention. That's why it's called an "intervention," because you intervene with the child's regular, integrated program and you provide these services.

I marvel at the way the Liberals are about to abandon not only their promise on autism but also their promise on the national child benefit supplement: to stop the clawback.

If I had more time, I'd love to speak at length about this broken promise on the commitment to day care. In fact, the minister failed to even show up for the Hamilton Coalition for Better Day Care meeting in this chamber two weeks ago, to everyone's disappointment.

Ms. Martel: It's a pleasure for me to wrap up on behalf of our party.

This is all about the promise that the Premier made to a number of vulnerable children and their parents. I'm going to deal specifically with autism, and I want to begin by saying that there was a very specific promise.

I want to acknowledge the presence of Nancy Morrison, who's in the gallery today. It was because of her intervention that we now have a copy of the very famous letter and the clear commitment that was made. And let there be no mistake about it: Nancy wrote to the Ontario Liberal Party during the election. She said she was the author of a very substantial e-mail list and wanted to know the political party's position with respect to extending IBI. She made very clear that she was going to post that so that voters like herself could make decisions about who to vote for in the best interest of their kids. That was done on September 8.

1740

We all know what the reply was, but it's worth reading into the record again. September 17, 2003, Mr. McGuinty writes back to Ms. Morrison and says, "I also believe that the lack of government-funded IBI treatment for autistic children over six is unfair and discriminatory. The Ontario Liberals support extending autism treatment beyond the age of six." And further: "We are not at all confident that the Harris-Eves Conservatives care to devise any innovative solution for autistic children over six—especially those with best-outcome possibilities that might potentially be helped within the school system with especially trained EAs."

So not only were we going to extend IBI past the age of six, but we were going to put it into the schools and use specially trained EAs to support children in school. It's interesting that after the minister and the Premier two

weeks ago tried to refuse to acknowledge that even any kind of promise had been made, we got e-mails from a number of people who had copies of questionnaires and responses from other Liberal candidates, also talking about the very same promise. Of course, we got copies of Michael Bryant who said that, absolutely, we are going to extend this past the age of six, and from the Wayne Arthurs campaign to Ms. Fiala, also that we were going to extend this past the age of six.

We got another one from the Mike Colle campaign to Arthur Lofski saying that, absolutely, "We support extended autism treatment beyond the age of six," that they are not confident with whatever the Tories are doing. Here is another one that came from Kevin Flynn to Cindy Faria, as well saying, absolutely. He said this at an all-candidates meeting, that of course he supported extending it beyond the age of six. He even supported it being covered under OHIP, and he was going to fight for that.

So there is no doubt about the specific election promise. The sad reality is that since that promise was made, this government has done everything in its power to try and avoid keeping the promise.

Now I want to talk about the school support program, because this was the pathetic excuse the minister trotted out as the government's response to extending IBI treatment to kids after six and putting IBI in the schools. The support program is essentially some folks with some kind of qualifications coming and talking to teachers, trying to give teachers some strategy about how to intervene with kids with autism. It has nothing to do with providing IBI in the schools past the age of six, which is what this government promised.

Let me tell you about the reaction of some of the parents to this program. Here is Kim Paulsen who just wrote to Mr. Kennedy on April 18, and said the following:

"These individuals are strictly to 'train the trainer.' Our teachers are extremely overburdened, this is the last thing they need. These individuals are not permitted to work directly with the students with ASD...or interact with the parents.... Please explain to me how this group of trained specialists will be of any benefit to my children?"

"The Toronto District School Board already has an ASD team and once again they are not permitted to work with the student nor interact with the parent. I was refused access to a meeting with the school and the ASD team, even though they were discussing my child."

Here is another one from Tom Barger. He wrote to us on April 6, saying: "I'm not holding out much hope for this program. I've already been cautioned that this is not a service for the kids but a coaching service for the schools.... I'm really looking forward to begging the people who systematically disadvantaged my son with the EIBI program to consult with our school board, which to date has refused all of our offers of assistance, computers, software, offers to pay for training," etc.

Here is a third one from Cynthia Boufford from London. Her son was cut off IBI by this government when he turned six. She says the following: “My interest” in this program “of course stems from the fact that Jordan’s needs are not being met in his classroom.” On the advice of his professional therapist, “Jordan should have continued IBI therapy and a buddy system should be set up at school to help him learn essential social skills. We requested this and it was denied. IBI is not available to him because there are no trained staff to deliver it. A simple buddy system, immediately denied, would cost absolutely nothing. So much for meeting the needs of students diagnosed with autism.... So Jordan can simply lie on the ground during recess and look up into the clouds, oblivious to his surroundings, shutting everything and everyone out. All the hard work of IBI being wasted as he learns to enjoy slipping away rather than playing with peers.

“Thought you might like to know what McGuinty’s autism school program looks like from our perspective. It’s nonexistent.”

And that is absolutely a fact. It is completely nonexistent, and it certainly doesn’t respond to the promise the government made to extend IBI treatment past the age of six and to ensure that EAs were specifically trained to have IBI in the school system.

The government has said, and I heard a number of Liberal members talk about, “Well, maybe there’s not too much proof that IBI works after age six.” Do you know what? The government, during the Deskin-Wynberg court case, trotted out all kinds of experts, who testified that really you should start the program earlier, and maybe there isn’t so much to it if you start it at age six. I can tell you, to her credit, Justice Kiteley dismissed all of that evidence and said very clearly, “I find that the age cut-off reflects and reinforces the stereotype that children with autism over age six are virtually unredeemable.” “To deny the plaintiff children the opportunity to have [IBI] after the age of five is to stereotype them, to prejudice them, and to create a disadvantage for them.”

What did Justice Kiteley say about this government’s program? I think that’s worth putting into the record again. Here are some of the findings she makes:

(1) Violation of the children’s Charter rights occurred because the government knew by October 2002 that more children were aging out of the IEIP because they turned six than were actually receiving IBI; the government knew that school-aged autistic children were not receiving appropriate special education programs and services in the schools, and yet the government continued to fund a program which only included autistic children aged two to five, including the Liberal government.

(2) The Minister of Education failed to fulfill the statutory duty to ensure that appropriate special education programs and special education services were available to all exceptional pupils without the payment of fees. In particular, the Minister of Education failed to develop policy and give direction to school boards to ensure that IBI services are provided to children of compulsory

school age. Indeed, the actions and inactions of the Ministry of Education and the minister created a policy barrier to the availability of IBI in schools. The absence of IBI means that children with autism are excluded from the opportunity to access learning, with a consequential deprivation of skills, the likelihood of isolation from society and the loss of the ability to exercise the rights and freedoms to which all Canadians are entitled. That’s what Justice Kiteley has to say about this government’s program for autistic children in Ontario schools.

On the constitutional questions—because I’ve heard this minister, this Premier and other members say how proud they are of this program—let me tell you what Justice Kiteley found. Justice Kiteley found the following on the constitutional questions:

Does the age criterion in the intensive early intervention program contravene the infant plaintiffs’ right under section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms on the basis of age? Yes.

If so, is the violation justified under section 1 of the Charter? No.

Do the actions or inactions of the Minister of Education constitute a violation of his duty under subsection 8(3) of the Education Act by failing or refusing to ensure that IBI, speech therapy, occupational therapy and appropriate educational services are provided to children of compulsory school age, in a manner contrary to the infant plaintiffs’ rights under section 15 of the charter on the basis of disability? Yes.

This government’s program, that they are so proud of, violates the charter rights of autistic children on the basis of age and on the basis of this disability, and you are proud of that? For goodness’ sake, give your heads a shake.

Now, after making the promise to extend IBI, this government is going to appeal the ruling of Justice Kiteley, and you are going to spend millions and millions of taxpayers’ dollars to fight these parents one more time in court—millions and millions of dollars, I say, that could be spent on their treatment to ensure that they could be contributing members of society. Shame on this government.

The promise of the Premier was clear before the last election, when he was out trolling for votes among these families. He said very clearly that this was discrimination, that a Liberal government would end the discrimination against autistic children over the age of six, that a Liberal government would provide IBI treatment to autistic children over the age of six and that a Liberal government would ensure that funding in the education system was used to train educational assistants to provide IBI in school. It’s time for you to live up to your promise. Stop abusing these families. Stop abusing these kids. Do what you promised when you wanted votes from these families.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It’s a pleasure to join the debate at this late date. I don’t think we as a government can ever do enough for our children in this province, but I don’t think we as a government need to

take lessons from that party or from that party in this regard. You had the opportunity; you did nothing. You had the opportunity; you froze funding to child care centres, and you know it. You are in no position to lecture this government.

The Deputy Speaker: The time for debate has expired.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I also heard some unparliamentary language that I don't appreciate. Nevertheless, we'll deal with the vote.

Mr. Hampton has moved opposition day number 2:

That, in the opinion of this House, the McGuinty government must keep its promises to Ontario children.

Regarding the baby bonus: "We will end the clawback of the national child benefit supplement. The clawback is wrong and we will end it."

Regarding early learning and child care: "We are committing \$300 million in new provincial money for Best Start." "We will spend the money offered by the federal Liberals on regulated, centre-based child care."

Regarding autism treatment: "I believe that the lack of government-funded IBI treatment for autistic children over six is unfair and discriminatory. The Ontario Liberals support extending autism treatment beyond the age of six." And that the McGuinty government must not appeal the Ontario Superior Court ruling regarding the rights of autistic children to receive this treatment.

Addressed to the Premier of Ontario.

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 nays have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1752 to 1802.

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

Ayes

Barrett, Toby	Hudak, Tim	Martiniuk, Gerry
Churley, Marilyn	Jackson, Cameron	Munro, Julia
Flaherty, Jim	Klees, Frank	Prue, Michael
Hampton, Howard	Kormos, Peter	Runciman, Robert W.
Hardeman, Ernie	Marchese, Rosario	
Horwath, Andrea	Martel, Shelley	

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

Nays

Arthurs, Wayne	Duncan, Dwight	Phillips, Gerry
Bartolucci, Rick	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Pupatello, Sandra
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Fonseca, Peter	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bradley, James J.	Hoy, Pat	Ramsay, David
Brotten, Laurel C.	Jeffrey, Linda	Rinaldi, Lou
Brown, Michael A.	Marsales, Judy	Sandals, Liz
Brownell, Jim	Mauro, Bill	Sergio, Mario
Cansfield, Donna H.	McMeekin, Ted	Smith, Monique
Caplan, David	Milloy, John	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Colle, Mike	Mitchell, Carol	Watson, Jim
Delaney, Bob	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wong, Tony C.
Di Cocco, Caroline	Oraziotti, David	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	Peters, Steve	Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 16; the nays are 39.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

It being past 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1804.

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