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des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 11 May 2005

Mercredi 11 mai 2005

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 11 May 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 11 mai 2005

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SUMMERFOLK

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound):

This August 19, 20 and 21 marks the 30th anniversary of Summerfolk. Located in Owen Sound, situated on the shores of Georgian Bay, the Summerfolk festival is a music, arts and crafts festival, which for three decades has presented international and local musicians and artists.

Every year, more than 4,000 music fans come to Kelso Beach for three days to enjoy everything from Celtic to folk to blues music and participate in workshops, allowing them to get a more personal view of the performers. The natural stone and earth amphitheatre is the main stage, and the five side stages and the ever-popular Down by the Bay tent accommodate nearly 100 performers.

My wife, Sue, and I are members of the Georgian Bay Folk Society, which presents Summerfolk. The society is able to manage the event with the assistance of over 600 volunteers, who do everything from security to maintenance and cleanup of the site.

The current artistic director, Liz Harvey-Foulds, selected this year's performers from 1,800 applicants, and has put together a lineup this year that includes Valdy, Ian Tamblyn, Reggae Cowboys and Trout Fishing in America, to name a few.

Previous artistic directors include Tim Harrison, returning to perform this year, Ross Gibbons, Mitch Podolak, Neil Glenn and Don Bird. Summerfolk has grown over the past quarter century and attracts visitors from across North America.

With 40 artisans exhibiting their talents in the craft area, more than a dozen food booths, a sandy beach, a children's area, ample free parking, camping nearby as well as great local bed and breakfasts and good hotels, there is every reason to come to Owen Sound and celebrate 30 years of the Summerfolk experience.

KITCHENER YOUTH ACTION COUNCIL

Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): If you are like me, you may sometimes grow a little overwhelmed by the many problems and challenges facing our society. I

refuse to be disheartened, however, because I know there is a generation following us that's full of energy, ideas and imagination.

On Thursday last week, I had the chance to help honour members of this generation by attending the eighth annual Kitchener Youth Action Council's awards ceremony at our city hall.

The Kitchener Youth Action Council, known as KYAC, is a group of volunteers between the ages of 14 and 24 who work within the city of Kitchener and act as the voice for the city's young people. They raise the awareness of issues affecting youth and help ensure that Kitchener is a fun, safe place for youth to live and that the contributions young people make to our community are properly recognized.

Last week's ceremony helped to celebrate many examples of excellent youth leadership. I'm pleased to take this opportunity to congratulate all who were nominated, and particularly those who won a KYAC Award. These include Alex Perssaud, Amani and Rajaa Yousef, Ashley Trakalo, Chad McCordic, Dennis Zvolensky, Fozia Jamal Abdi, Jordan Alexander, Josh Haddon, Terri-Lynn Langdon, William Makrigani, Celena Lilich, Josh Howitt, Ashley Graham and Tara Vanderzand. They were all truly deserving recipients and help to remind everyone that our future is indeed in good hands.

FAMILIES FOR A SECURE FUTURE

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): On Monday night I was pleased to be in the town of Erin to congratulate and thank the members of Families for a Secure Future and recognize the good work that they do in the province. It was great to be invited to a public event once again in Erin, a community I was privileged to represent in this Legislature for nine years, from 1990 to 1999, before redistribution. The Families for a Secure Future program is run by families for families, and they work to provide ongoing planning support to individuals with intellectual disabilities. We gathered to celebrate their success in obtaining a substantial Trillium Foundation grant.

To illustrate why they are such a worthy recipient of funding from the Trillium Foundation, one only has to see their vision statement, in which they say, "We are striving to support the choices of our family member with a developmental disability to achieve a meaningful life in the community." I want to offer my congratulations to Marv and Nancy McDougall of the Hillsburgh area for their work with this organization and leadership in their

community. The Families for a Secure Future program received \$289,500 over five years. That is certainly one of the largest investments from the Ontario Trillium Foundation that I have seen in our communities.

I'm thoroughly impressed with the work that they are doing for the betterment of people with disabilities. I want to recognize their emphasis on helping families overcome the isolation that they experience as they provide care for their adult children, and say how much I appreciate the fact that they have chosen to reach out in rural Ontario. I wish Families for a Secure Future the best in achieving their goals to help more individuals and families in the years to come.

KASHECHEWAN FIRST NATION

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): Yet again I want to take this opportunity to say just how stupid the federal government is and how insensitive they are when it comes to dealing with First Nations communities. Last week, Monte Kwinter and I went up to Kashechewan First Nation to visit at first hand the damage that has been done there as a result of a flood. I give full credit to the minister and the government for trying to respond, from what we can do on the provincial side, to deal with the issues, and I would have to say that the province has been very responsive up to now. But the federal government yet again is showing just how ridiculous they are when it comes to dealing with our First Nations.

Now get a load of this: The community is on a boil-water advisory. The water plant doesn't work. This is how simple it is. The position that the federal government takes is that they are not going to supply the community with any potable water by airlifting bottled water into the community. So my federal member, Charlie Angus, and I intervened with the federal government, and they said, "OK, we'll provide potable water in bottles to children and people who are elderly who might be at risk." Well, what happens to the other 80% of the community? Are they supposed to not drink water or are they supposed to drink the bad water?

I just want to say yet again that I am getting increasingly fed up with the federal government's handling of First Nations' issues and think that at one point we as a province need to step in and start serving these people, who live in the province of Ontario, and provide them with the kind of infrastructure that we do in every other community in this province that we take for granted.

Shame on the federal government. They should wake up and do their jobs. If not, step aside and let us do it.

NORTH BAY LIONS CLUB

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): I rise today to congratulate the North Bay Lions Club on their 80th anniversary. As many of you know, the Lions Club is one of the largest service organizations in the world, with more than 46,000 clubs in 193 countries. Our club in North Bay began in 1925, when we were still very small,

and it has contributed to the growth and prosperity of our city immensely over the last 80 years.

The club and the Lions and Lionesses involved with it have served our community in a variety of important ways over the last 80 years.

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The club purchased an X-ray machine and kidney dialysis machine for the North Bay General Hospital. As well, they contributed \$250,000 for ophthalmology equipment to keep eye specialists in our area. They also collected 2,000 pairs of eyeglasses and 422 pairs of lenses, which they distributed to the Third World. Their work with the hearing-impaired through the resource centre for the hearing-impaired in Sudbury has been remarkable. They have also made a major commitment to our upcoming North Bay regional health facility.

There are many dedicated, noble individuals involved in the North Bay Lions Club, many of whom were celebrated on Saturday night. I unfortunately cannot name them all, but I would like to note and congratulate Blake Chappelle, the president of the club; Norm Hillock, a 25-year volunteer who did a great job as emcee on Saturday; and, in particular, Doug Harrison, a 58-year member of the club, and Merve St Amand, who has served the club for 45 years. They, together with their colleagues, represent an incredible amount of time, energy and service to our community.

Thank you to all the Lions and Lionesses in the North Bay Lions Club for giving so generously of their time and energy. Their dedication is truly appreciated. I congratulate them on 80 years and wish them 80 more.

PRECIOUS MINDS RESOURCE AND LEARNING CENTRE

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to report to the House that last month I had the privilege of visiting Precious Minds Resource and Learning Centre, located in north Durham. It's on Highway 12 north of Greenbank and south of Sunderland, serving Brock and Uxbridge township.

I was there for the presentation of a \$138,000 grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. The grant, along with funds raised in the community, will develop programs, purchase materials, and operate the resource and learning centre over a three-year period. Precious Minds offers support groups for parents and professionals regarding learning disabilities and physical and developmental disabilities. It serves over 400 families, offering summer camps, parental and family resources, and support for children.

I would like to commend executive director Elizabeth Graham and her entire team of dedicated staff, as well as Sharon Simmonds, chair of the board, and the many equally dedicated parents and volunteers. Board members include Bonnie Noble, vice-chair, Laurie Noakes, Stephanie Weddel and Karen Rennie.

I'm confident that members of the House will join me in wishing the children, staff, parents and volunteers at

Precious Minds continued success in the future. This is the second such grant that Precious Minds has received. There is more good work in the future and I will support them all the way.

I would also like to recognize Doris Grinspun from the RNAO, who is in the gallery here today on Nurses' Week in Ontario.

HAMILTON MENNONITE CHURCH

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): I rise in the House today to acknowledge the good work of the Hamilton Mennonite Church in west Hamilton. On April 15, they held a fundraiser and dinner in support of the Mennonite Central Committee, a highly respected NGO that fosters peace, justice and development in developing countries around the world.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency's recent ban on portable meat canners across our country has deeply affected the MCC's plan to continue their philanthropy in lesser-developed countries. This ban will be in effect at the end of 2005, and in anticipation of this event, the MCC has planned to can meat for distribution as emergency food relief to global disaster areas around the world. The fundraiser in Hamilton on the 15th raised money to speed up the canning process in order to ensure that there will be enough food to go around when the ban comes into effect. I want to sincerely thank them for their warm hospitality and generosity afforded to myself and to my mother at the time and to commend them for their wonderful work.

I would also like to welcome the president of Mohawk College, Marylynn West-Moynes, who is sitting in the gallery right now and is doing a wonderful job at one of the most highly respected colleges in Hamilton.

GOLDEN AGE ACADEMY

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): I would like to take this opportunity to speak about a wonderful non-profit organization called Golden Age Academy, founded in 1997. This organization is dedicated to providing seniors an opportunity to use their artistic skills and experience to enhance Ontarians' quality of life. The academy promotes active involvement of the members during their retirement. The members express their artistic talents by participating in many exhibits during the year where they expose their work of painting and sculpture.

On Wednesday, May 4, I was pleased to attend the exhibit opening at the Columbus Centre in Toronto. I was impressed with the quality of art. What is most interesting is that most of the members had not taken painting or sculpting before their retirement. In fact, their background was quite different, but after so many years of working hard in our new country, Canada, to raise a family and pay the mortgage, they finally have some time to dedicate to something that stimulates them, and that is art. I believe that the Golden Age Academy can provide

leadership to seniors in Ontario so that our seniors' lives can continue to be exciting and challenging.

I wish to thank LIUNA 506 for providing a place, the Columbus Centre for hosting the exhibit, Marino Toppan for being the president, and Mirella Tersigni and Mr. Tersigni for providing art leadership to the Golden Age Academy.

FIBROMYALGIA AND CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I rise today to ask members of this House to recognize May 12 as National Awareness Day for Fibromyalgia and Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, and to remember this day as it marks Canada's first national campaign for these two life-altering illnesses.

More than one million Canadians battle fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue syndrome, including children, two facts I consider to be alarming. Sufferers report that they experience chronic and widespread pain, neurological changes and unending fatigue, symptoms that often lead to other conditions such as anxiety and depression. There is currently no known means to prevent fibromyalgia or chronic fatigue syndrome and no identified cause. While there is no cure, there are some encouraging signs of treatment.

It is apparent that two main issues have to be addressed: First, more research needs to be conducted into the health concerns, as only a handful of researchers are working toward solutions. Secondly, there is a need to educate Ontario medical practitioners and patients on how to recognize and treat fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue syndrome.

I would like to thank the people of FM-CFS Canada, which is located in my riding of Ottawa Centre, for putting forth a tireless effort in advocating increased research and education. I commend them on their extensive initiatives. Be assured that this statement is intended to be a symbol of my support for this first national campaign. I therefore encourage everyone in this House to put their compassion in action to offer hope to the more than one million Canadians struggling with pain on a daily basis.

VISITORS

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm delighted to introduce to the members of the House special guests in the east gallery: the director of the newly established Rental Control Bureau from Shenzhen city in China and her husband, Dr. Lan Chi Jing. They are accompanied by our good friends from Toronto, Dr. Gan Xiao Juan and his lovely wife, Sylvia.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Member from Davenport, that was not a point of order.

The member from Mississauga South on the same type of point of order?

Mr. Tim Peterson (Mississauga South): Absolutely, a very important one, Mr. Speaker. I'm here to comment on the quality of the chambers of commerce across Ontario and the great job they do, and to recognize that I have seven members from the Mississauga chamber of commerce with us in the audience today: Russ McCall, Pamela Lester, Colin Tyler, Chuck Stobie, Lowell Rubin, Sonia Mistry and Mary-Ann Malush. Welcome, and thank you for the great work the chamber does in working with our government and improving the economy and the way—

The Speaker: Thank you. I'm extremely tolerant today. That also was not a point of order.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated May 11, 2005, of the standing committee on government agencies. Pursuant to standing order 106(e)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AMENDMENT ACT (SEVERANCE ALLOWANCE), 2005 LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE (ALLOCATION DE DÉPART)

Mr. Murdoch moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 196, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act with respect to severance allowances / Projet de loi 196, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative en ce qui concerne les allocations de départ.

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

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ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): A question for the Premier: On September 11, 2003, you made a solemn pledge that you wouldn't raise taxes and wouldn't run deficits. You said your word was your bond and affixed your signature to that pledge, and we all

know what happened next. Your illegitimate health tax will double this year, hitting taxpayers twice as hard as last year. In effect, you've already raised taxes this year.

Premier, Ontarians are tired of your making empty promises. The question is, are you tired yet of breaking them?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): I can tell you that we are very much looking forward to very shortly introducing in this Legislature—not in an auto parts factory but right here in this Legislature—a very solid budget which will speak, as I've said over the recent days, to the greatest priorities of the people of Ontario. They want us to continue to improve their public schools, they want us to continue to work harder to improve the quality of the health care they receive, and they want us to do more to strengthen our economy, which is the foundation for our public services. Our budget will speak to all those things.

Mr. Runciman: Premier, for two weeks you've refused to answer questions about your plans for dealing with your deficit. Before the election, you said, and I'm quoting, that you will balance the budget, keep taxes down and manage prudently, all of which we now know to be a pipe dream. In last year's budget, you broke your promise of balancing the budget each year, instead saying you would have it balanced by 2007. Now senior Liberal sources quoted in today's media say you have abandoned that pledge as well. You are literally making it up as you go along. Premier, when you talk about managing prudently, why should Ontarians believe a single word you say?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The member opposite, like his colleagues, is plagued by short-term memory loss and doesn't like to recall the fact that they saddled us and the people of Ontario with a hidden \$5.6-billion deficit. Notwithstanding that sleight of hand, we've had to take that into account as we move forward, and we are managing our finances and what we have inherited in a prudent and responsible manner. We've managed to make close to \$3 billion by way of new investments in our health care system, and over \$1 billion in investments in our education system. In our first year in office, we have secured three times as many full-time jobs as part of the growth in this economy than did our predecessors.

So we're proud. There is much work left to be done. We will continue that, and we'll take the next important step very shortly through this budget.

Mr. Runciman: Premier, for weeks you've refused to answer questions about another one of your so-called priority areas: health care. Last year alone, you gave hospitals half of what they needed to meet patient needs, but you held firm and said there would be no bailouts. Then there was a bailout, but that was followed by yet more cuts. It's like watching Mr. Dithers, Jr. You took \$170 million away from hospitals and gave them a \$100-million bailout, and you spent another \$100 million of our health tax money to fire almost a thousand nurses. Premier, why should Ontarians have any faith in today's budget when you're so seemingly prone to making all of it up as you go along?

Hon. Mr. McQuinty: It's kind of an interesting theme, but it's just not grounded in reality or in fact. There are only two parties in this House that have ever cut funding for hospitals, and we're not one of them. We're proud to have invested an additional \$1.7 billion in hospitals since earning the privilege of serving Ontarians as their government. By the way, that is hundreds of millions of dollars more than was committed to by the previous government through their Magna budget.

We are proud of the responsible approach we're bringing to management of the people's finances. We're also particularly proud of the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, which will require that the state of the government's finances be made public prior to an election. I note in passing that the members opposite, the Conservative Party, would not endorse that particular piece of legislation, which tells me that, if given the chance, they would hide a deficit again.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Minister of Education. Yesterday, during question period, you made the following statement in response to a question concerning your dealings with the school bus operators of Ontario: "We have an agenda with the bus operators of Ontario, but at our last meeting we asked them six or eight pointed questions, which we're still waiting for replies to."

I have an e-mail from the stakeholders who were present at that meeting, and they have a very different recollection of what was said. In fact, it was you who committed to write to them, the Ontario School Bus Association, with specific questions on industry data. After reminders from them, they have yet to hear from you. Minister, was this just a convenient lapse in memory, or did you intentionally mislead this House?

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): The member knows that he has used some unparliamentary language. Would the member withdraw that comment?

Mr. Klees: With respect, Speaker, if the—

The Speaker: Order. I'm asking the member to either withdraw or not. It's not a speech.

Mr. Klees: Yes, certainly. Let me rephrase: Was this a convenient lapse of memory on your part, Minister, because your words in the House yesterday are in contradiction to what stakeholders are saying.

Hon. Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): I am never, unfortunately, surprised by the depth of class exhibited by the member opposite. I appreciate that somewhere in there—and I do not discount that he has some genuine concern about transportation services in this province, as do we. We did have a meeting with stakeholders, and I stand by my remarks from yesterday: We are interested. There are a number of contentions being made. A number of people had visits, I think, from some of the bus operators, and we are trying to understand the facts of the matter. There is a wide range of arrangements across the province, and we have interested ourselves in that.

In the wake of the last government ignoring the question for seven or eight years, we've tried to come up with a good, equitable funding formula. We increased funding last year. We will try to resolve what we think is the essential issue, which is safety and effective transportation for the students of this province.

Mr. Klees: If you don't want to admit to giving us incorrect information here, then stand in your place and tell us that the stakeholders are lying, because here's what they said: "I sent him a personal note on January 14 thanking him for meeting and reminding him of his intent to write with a list of his questions."

To quote again: "I wrote again on February 22 reminding him."

The e-mail references two other specific times when you were spoken to directly. Minister, who's telling the truth: you or the stakeholders?

1400

Hon. Mr. Kennedy: Again, I appreciate the honourable member opposite's interest but it frankly has almost nothing to do with the meeting that we had. The members of the school bus association that he's representing want something from the government, and we are prepared to enter into dialogue with them. But very specific requests were made for industry data. In fact, they were prepared to—for example, I would say to the member opposite, how would we know their profit and loss margin? How would we know some of their effective costs? How would we know some of the things they're claiming? Those are things they were going to provide, and we remain interested in that. Contact was made between some of my officials and some of those operators when we didn't get the information. Not too long from now, there will be things that are provided for to help the students of this province.

He is advocating for certain bus operators, I don't doubt with some good intent, if not with very much effect.

Mr. Klees: Minister, the first meeting you had took place on January 12. Subsequent reminders of your undertaking to them were sent to you in writing on January 14 and again on February 22, and there was direct conversation with you on February 23, during which you said that probably your staff forgot to get back. And then on March 11, your director of policy and stakeholder relations, Rob Esselment, was given copies of all outstanding correspondences.

I quote from the Ontario School Bus Association's e-mail dated today: "Still nothing from Mr. Kennedy to the OSBA." Minister, rather than discrediting yourself further by attempting to justify your lack of action on this file, will you agree today to meet with the Ontario School Bus Association to resolve this issue?

Hon. Mr. Kennedy: I know you're very familiar with the association. I know that some of the people that work for it used to work for you and your caucus, and I think that's good. What I would say is that both the member opposite and your former staff are giving them that advice. The way to solve problems in education, and I

would say in any area of government endeavour, is to provide the facts and constructively find solutions. That is exactly what we have invited the school bus operators, as well as the school boards and all interested parties, to do.

I appreciate who he is representing here today. They would be better served to represent themselves. We look forward to meeting with them as we have in the past. Ultimately, again, the important thing is resolving problems that affect the transportation and safety of students in the province. To that we are committed and we will deliver the results.

AIR QUALITY

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): A question to the Premier, and Premier, if you don't answer my question today, I'm out of here.

Yesterday marked another smog day, the second in three weeks, and we've yet to hit the heat of summer. In 2004, Toronto suffered 13 smog days, up from 11 in 2003. In 2005, we have already had three smog alerts, including a rare winter alert in early February. Yet despite the increase in the number of smog days, your government eliminated the light duty vehicle inspection program and cut the number of smog patrol staff by 50%. It is clear your government is more concerned about cutting budgets than cutting smog. For the sake of Ontario's health, will you reverse the cuts to the smog patrol?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I'm going to take the first question because who knows how much longer we'll have the honourable member here to enjoy the grace of her presence. I've always appreciated her intervention and never underestimated her commitment to the environment in particular. I'm saying nice things like this because I assume that you are not coming back.

Let me just say, before I give the sups to the minister, that we have moved heaven and earth when it comes to our environmental agenda, and in particular when it comes to cleaning up our air. Just recently, we were very proud to shut down the Lakeview coal-fired generating plant and, so we are clear, that is the equivalent of taking 500,000 cars off Ontario roads. We are proud of that accomplishment. I know the minister will speak in some detail about the issue being raised by the member opposite.

Ms. Churley: Minister, clearly if you had things under control, as the Premier said, we'd be seeing less, not more, smog days. As you are aware, the Provincial Auditor found in his 2004 report that for two of the main parts of smog, sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxide, a poor rating is not automatically applied when their concentrations exceed the air quality standard established in the air quality index. Sulphur dioxide levels were allowed to exceed the standard by 38%, whereas nitrogen oxide levels were allowed to go over by 28% before a smog alert was triggered.

Stop trying to hide the actual number of smog days to which we're exposed. Will you guarantee today that

when sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxide levels exceed the established standard in the air quality index, a smog alert will be issued?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the minister, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): I presume the Minister of the Environment, that is.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): Our government is not trying to hide the number of smog days that there have been. It's a matter of public record. I would just like to share with the honourable member that in 2001, sadly, there were 20 smog days in the city of Toronto, in 2002 there were 18, in 2003 there were 12 and in 2004 there were 14. If you consider those numbers, you would agree that it would appear that there is a downward trend. But I think what is more important to keep in mind is the good work that our government, led by our Premier, has underway to reduce caps on nitrogen oxide and sulphur dioxide. We are increasing the number of sectors to whom these caps will apply. As the Premier has indicated, we are committed to replacing coal-fired generation. We are committed to cleaner gasoline. We are investing in transit to take more vehicles off the road. That is going to have a positive impact on air quality in the province of Ontario. So I'm very proud of the commitment and the record of this government.

Ms. Churley: Minister, I don't think that's an acceptable answer to those of us with kids and grandkids with asthma.

Listen to this: The auditor also revealed that air quality standards for carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide and sulphur dioxide used in the ministry's air quality index are much lower than World Health Organization standards, as well as standards used in the United Kingdom and Australia. Given that Australia produces over three times as much electricity from coal as Ontario, there are other reasons why Ontario's air quality standard for sulphur dioxide is inferior to Australia's. All you talk about is shutting down coal plants, but you've only shut down one. What's going on here? What are you going to do about those other sources that are leading to bad air quality in this province?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: Again, I think the honourable member should review her notes. She would know that this government is proud of our five-point air plan. We are placing caps on NO_x and SO_x in six additional sectors. We have added 29 contaminants that must now be measured in the province of Ontario in terms of air quality that were never measured before.

She belongs to a party that thinks it's all right to burn coal. Our government is committed to replacing coal. She cites the incidence of sulphur dioxide in our air. Well, coal contributes to that significantly, and yet she belongs to a party that supports the use of coal-fired generation for energy in this province. So you can't talk out of both sides of your mouth. You cannot have it both ways. You cannot preach about cleaner air and standards and yet promote those very things that contaminate our air to begin with. I'm proud of our record to replace coal-fired

generation, for cleaner gasoline, for investment in transit and for—

The Speaker: Thank you.

DUFFINS-ROUGE AGRICULTURAL PRESERVE

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): To the Premier—but what absolute nonsense, that I, of all people, support burning coal. Nobody's going to believe that ridiculous nonsense.

My question to the Premier is: Durham region's planning committee has voted to let stand the city of Pickering's decision to overturn the easements on the Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve. As you know, easements are trusts, which constitute a sacred legal tradition. Allowing the easements in the Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve to be paved over is the wrong message to send to Ontarians presently considering putting easements on their lands for conservation purposes. Will you announce today that you're going to court to uphold the easements on the Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): To the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): I would like to thank the member very much for her question because, as she knows, this government has done more about greenbelt protection than any government has over the last 150 years. We are very pleased that a million more acres were added to the greenbelt protected area of the Oak Ridges moraine and the Niagara Escarpment.

1410

As the member well knows, and I believe the Chair of Management Board indicated this earlier in another question, he wrote the mayor on April 11, this year, stating that the provincial government continues to be committed to preserving these lands' agricultural use. Let me make it absolutely clear: The Duffins-Rouge ag preserve will remain in agricultural use. As a matter of fact, the Chair of Management Board went on in his letter to say quite definitively that it's our expectation that Pickering will, in the future, honour the commitment to maintain these lands as an agricultural area and continue to uphold the intent and spirit of the memorandum of understanding agreed to by Pickering, Durham—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Supplementary.

Ms. Churley: Minister, I asked you a very specific question. I'll go back to the Premier. Let me make it absolutely clear: In the absence of speedy court action by the government, we are beginning to wonder whether land developer Mr. DeGasparis and Mayor Dave Ryan of Pickering are getting special treatment. The public certainly recalls their attendance at the secret \$10,000-a-plate fundraising dinner with the Premier and finance minister.

The city of Pickering has already taken the money and run. Part of the \$4.2 million they received from

developers for lifting the easements is being used right now to reduce their property tax increase from 6.7% to 5.5%. That money rightfully belongs to the people of Ontario, not the city of Pickering. Now that the region of Durham says they won't defend the easements on the Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve, once again I ask you, are you going to court or not?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: As the member well knows, in addition to the fact that the ag preserve is currently within the greenbelt and will remain permanently in the greenbelt, there is a minister's zoning order on the property that also protects it. It is protected in a number of different ways. I can assure you this government will do whatever we can to make sure those easements stay on the lands, as they were intended to, as all the parties agreed to some three or four years ago.

Ms. Churley: Minister, I've got to tell you, you are the only person left in Ontario who believes your greenbelt is permanent. Your government's understanding of "permanent" is as confused as Pickering council's understanding of "in perpetuity." Developers recognize that, contrary to your claims, one does not have to wait for the 10-year review to amend the greenbelt, and you know that, Minister. You have the power to initiate amendments to the greenbelt plan now, at any time. Ontarians are legitimately concerned that the Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve is going to be paved over. Quit stalling. Announce today that the province will go to court to uphold the easements and the public interest in the Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: Let me first of all say that I compliment the member and the minority of her party who saw the light and voted in favour of the Greenbelt Act. I know she is committed to the greenbelt. We're not sure about her leader or a lot of the other people. We certainly know the Tories aren't in favour of the greenbelt, because they want to pave over the ag preserve.

Let me just say this: The agricultural preserve has been preserved in a number of different ways. It has been preserved by way of the minister's zoning order, by way of the greenbelt legislation, and I can assure you that the easements are going to remain on that property, as far as this government is concerned. We want to make sure that the million acres of land that have been protected by the greenbelt area will remain in public ownership for generations to use in the years to come.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean–Carleton): My question is to my good friend the Premier. Premier, do you trust Paul Martin?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I trust the people of this province and I trust in our government's ability to work with the federal government, to work with this Prime Minister, and to work on behalf of the people of Ontario in securing a government at the federal level that will always,

always be there to ensure that they respect the fairness that is owed to the people of Ontario. To be very direct to the member opposite, I trust the Prime Minister.

Mr. Baird: It took two full sentences to get an answer to what should be a very simple question.

Interjections.

Mr. Baird: I say to the members opposite, I want to trust Paul Martin, but the reality is, he leads a corrupt and unethical government, so people in Ontario are naturally concerned about whether they can. Premier, I want to help you hold this Prime Minister accountable. I want to help you ensure that Paul Martin—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Order. There's a point of order on the floor, and I'd like some quiet while I hear it.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I've listened carefully to the question and now the supplementary, and it would appear that this question has nothing to do with provincial policy and therefore would not be in order according to the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. This is nothing more than a blatant attempt to campaign for the federal House. I would ask, Mr. Speaker, that you look at the question and rule as to whether or not a question that has nothing to do with anything related to a provincial ministry is a legitimate question. My understanding of standing order 36 is that this is not in order.

The Speaker: I listened to the member from Nepean–Carleton, and I think that his supplementary does relate to his first question.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The clock continues to run if we continue to make this disruption.

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm going to volunteer to try to broker a deal between the Liberals and the Conservatives here.

The Speaker: Let's proceed with question period, please.

Mr. Baird: I want to trust Paul Martin, the people of Ontario want to trust Paul Martin, but the fact remains, he leads a corrupt and unethical administration.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker: You've ruled on whether or not the supplementary was related to the first question. My original point of order had to do with whether or not the first question and the second question were in order, given that they didn't deal with a specific provincial policy—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. We seem to have many Speakers here today. I did rule on the question, and I ruled that the first question asked by the member from Nepean–Carleton and his supplementary are relevant.

I'll put the clock back two minutes.

Mr. Baird: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The reality is that Paul Martin leads a corrupt and unethical government. People in Ontario—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The question has been asked.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: This has nothing to do with provincial policy. This is nuts, absolutely nuts.

1420

The Speaker: I'll ask the government House leader to come to order, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Could I ask the Minister of Health and Minister of Community and Social Services to come to order, and also the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

The question has been asked.

Mr. Baird: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I was continuously facing dilatory tactics and was not able to ask the question.

The Speaker: Please take your seat. The question has been asked, and I would ask the Premier to respond.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Well, a couple of responses: First of all, I think it is inappropriate to use this chamber to launch a federal campaign.

Secondly, the tenor and tone of the question are characteristic of an approach brought by the previous government. I think the people of Ontario are tired of the politics and they want progress. I think they are tired of the rhetoric and they want results. The approach we are bringing vis-à-vis the federal government, of any political stripe, was characterized by the progress we made, especially for new Canadians and unemployed workers, just this past week by working together with the federal government to get progress and results for Ontarians.

The Speaker: New question. The member for Timmins—Timmins–James Bay.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): I know we do get confused every now and then.

My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Last summer you announced the closure of the Huronia and Rideau centres, the last two centres that care for individuals who are severely disabled and have multiple diagnoses. At the same time, some of the community agencies in our community that will have to care for the people going into the community are shutting down group homes. Pray tell me—but more importantly, pray tell the public—how we can justify shutting down both group homes and the Huronia and Rideau centres at the same time.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): As this member is aware, for the last 15 years the government has been moving toward closing down institutions for people with developmental disabilities. It went right through the NDP government and right through the Conservative government, and now we are carrying that on. Over the last five years, we have moved 1,000 people out of institutions. In these next five years

we are moving 1,000. It is also the last 1,000. There are 38,000 others who have always been in the community, virtually—16,000 of those people living independently in the community—and we're proud of that. As a jurisdiction, we literally have the best community supports in the nation, and we're proud of that. Not only that, but beginning 18 months ago, we launched more investment in this sector than any other government has. Every government since the 1980s has continued to invest in developmental services: every single party, every single government.

Mr. Bisson: Minister, you can't be investing, because the very community organizations that run group homes in this province and provide community services can't provide the services to the existing community members now and are shutting down group homes. My question is, how can you justify not having enough money in the community sector, where organizations like the CTCRC in Timmins is shutting down a group home for eight residents this June in the city of Timmins, and at the same time we're going to be challenged in trying to deal with how we depopulate the last two provincial institutions? I go back to my question: How do you justify the closure of the last two provincial institutions and at the same time allow the closure of group homes in this province?

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: I appreciate the question so I can take a moment to suggest that the member opposite well knows what every one of us knows from being local MPPs; that is, families over the years have insisted that we change how we deliver services in the developmental services sector. Not only is it required by parents today that they want to keep their children at home; it has meant that we've had to change. Special services at home have grown every year, and we have more and more people who want special services at home and to not move people into the community. There are those whose aging parents do need to move into the community, and we have continued to increase the funding in this area.

I will suggest to the member that he and I are both well aware of the need for more resourcing in this area. Like every other government since the mid-1980s, we have continued to fund more and more in the developmental services sector, and I will commit to you today that we will continue to do the right thing for people with developmental disabilities in this province.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr. Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay–Superior North): My question is to the Minister of Health. As you know, this past February it was announced that on Friday, May 13—this coming Friday in fact—five of the six Geraldton doctors will be withdrawing their services. Obviously, this is a huge blow to the community. Geraldton's doctors currently operate the Geraldton District Hospital and the Geraldton Medical Clinic. To make matters more difficult, Minister, as you know, northern ridings such as mine face many challenges recruiting and retaining physicians.

Let me get directly to the first question: Can you indicate to me and the people of my riding exactly what steps your ministry has taken to address this big challenge?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I would like to particularly acknowledge the member from Thunder Bay–Superior North for his work in support of the local community. I think it's fair to say that many Ontario communities look in on the challenges faced by Geraldton and they do so with a great degree of concern on behalf of that community, and we share it.

We sent out what I would call a system-wide rallying cry, and what I've seen is a tremendous willingness and degree of response from a variety of different parts of the health care system with a view toward helping to address the challenges in Geraldton in the short term as we work toward longer-term solutions. Those are not limited to, but certainly include, the leadership and work of the mayor and those physicians who are remaining; the health care providers in other places like the Group Health Centre in Sault Ste. Marie, who have stepped up and are willing to play a role in being helpful; a Greenstone health professional recruitment and retention team made up of community members, to work on these issues on a longer-term basis; and the University of Toronto and St. Michael's Hospital, which are willing to play a role.

Through the efforts we've made to reach out to physicians across the province and ask for assistance, there has been a new Web site launched to try to assist with the coordination of locums. Again, this is part of the short-term response, but it will be important in helping to stabilize the situation as we build a longer-term resolution in a really challenging circumstance.

Mr. Gravelle: It's reassuring to hear that there has been such a wide effort and great response to attract new doctors to Geraldton. Clearly there's still work to be done, and we're all hoping that Geraldton will regain a full complement of permanent physicians as soon as possible.

Minister, if I may ask you one more question, given the progress made over the past few months, can we reassure all the patients served by the hospital that the Geraldton District Hospital will remain open after May 13?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The short answer is yes. I want to acknowledge the work of the CEO of Geraldton District Hospital, and others, in reaching out to physicians who have previously done locum work as a priority in asking them to come back and serve. I've been heartened to see other commitments being made on the part of physicians who are willing to go and do locum coverage there. We will keep services at the hospital going as part of the short-term resolution.

I would like to use this opportunity to inform the honourable member that in June, I've committed to coming to Geraldton with a view to working with the local community and making sure we are doing all we can do in a circumstance that I think is well recognized to

have been created on the watch of previous governments, leading to serious physician shortages.

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Minister of Education. This question is directly related to an offensive and disrespectful statement the minister made yesterday regarding Ontario's independent schools. The minister is responsible for overseeing and supporting all levels and branches of elementary and secondary education, including the 869 independent schools in this province. Will the minister today retract his statement characterizing the former government's support of private schools as a bad habit? Will he express his regret and apologize to the more than 120,000 students, their parents and the educators of those institutions today? Will the minister do that?

1430

Hon. Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): I have to say that, as a minister, I'm very flattered by the detailed attention the opposition critic pays to what he alleges are things I have said. I would like to say that we do appreciate that we have many fine schools that are not part of the publicly funded system. However, everyone should know that there is no government regulation, thanks to the members opposite. There has been nothing done to provide for that. The members opposite had a bad habit of doing things at the expense of our publicly funded system, taking away from the consensus that preceded them and that will survive them. They did that in favour of private schools that had no regulation. Even today, something we're now reviewing, you need as little as five students to create a private school. It's unfortunate that the member opposite was part of a government that threw all those schools in the same category with their proposition. The bad habit I asked them to leave behind is the same old thing we see today, which is this fear, division and conflict in education, and he perpetuates it. I wish he would let it go.

Mr. Klees: It's a very sad day in Ontario when the Minister of Education washes his hands of 869 schools in this province, 120,000 students, their parents and educators. Not only does he do that, but he treats them with disrespect. He says that I allege. I read from Hansard yesterday: "We invite the member to continue to support the idea of publicly funded education and leave the bad habits of the last government and the emphasis on private schools behind him where they belong: in the past."

Once again, I'm going to ask the Minister of Education to make the transition from a partisan politician to a minister of the crown and deal with his responsibilities as a minister with some dignity. Will the minister do that?

Hon. Mr. Kennedy: It's obvious the member opposite isn't asking me to match dignity—that's for sure—in terms of what he's looking for as a posture from here.

I will say this: It's not often that as minister you get the critic giving you an opportunity to elaborate on your

answer. I appreciate the chance, because the bad habits of the last government are hard to enumerate in one sentence. They include an unsupported policy of supporting private schools, without any consideration for the public purse whatsoever. They include letting our schools crumble, letting our students be in unsafe circumstances simply because you had priorities for tax cuts and other things. They include getting no results on behalf of the students in this province. Sitting in their plush seats opposite, those members abdicated their responsibility to make public education work. Yes, they had a lot of bad habits. What the people of the province need to know is that we're addressing every single one of them.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Minister of Health. One year ago today you announced you were investing \$191 million in long-term-care homes to hire 2,000 staff, including 600 nurses. The reality is that five months later, when the money finally went to long-term-care homes, only \$116 million was actually allocated to the base budgets of those homes. This was confirmed recently by Karen Sullivan, executive director of the Ontario Long Term Care Association, who said, "There was additional operating funding for staffing—\$96 million in 2004 and a further \$20 million on April 1, 2005, for approximately one quarter of the government's election commitment."

Minister, when will you actually keep the budget commitment you made last year, to invest \$191 million in the base budget of long-term-care homes?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): As I had the opportunity last week in the Legislature to continue to work on this issue, to correct the record of misinformation brought forward by the honourable member and her party, we made the point very well that in fact, over the course of the last fiscal year, we invested more than \$400 million in our long-term-care homes, the vast majority of that related to operating. This, of course, has contributed to significant new hiring in the long-term-care sector, has allowed us to restore some of the regulations that guarantee standards in our long-term-care homes, and accompanies a variety of other initiatives that, taken together, form the basis of a very significant reform package, lending itself to the use of the word "revolution," as we seek to continue to create more of a community environment in our long-term-care homes.

Ms. Martel: I'm sure that Karen Sullivan, executive director of the Ontario Long Term Care Association, will be pleased to hear that you think she is misinformed. We'll make sure to get her a copy of that Hansard. Donna Rubin, as well, confirmed for me in a meeting less than two months ago that the allocation was only \$116 million. Those two, who essentially operate all of the organizations in the province that deliver long-term care, both say the same thing. Maybe it's somebody else who is misinformed, and maybe he's sitting on the government benches.

You also promised that you were going to hire 2,000 new staff, including 600 new nurses, and you've repeatedly said that those nurses have been hired. In the public accounts committee meeting last Thursday morning, your ministry staff had to admit that they have no idea how many nurses have been hired in long-term-care homes. They did a baseline survey of the nurses who were in place in October 2004, but they admitted that they will not know until at least June of this year how many new nurses have actually been hired. How can you claim that 600 new nurses have been hired in long-term-care homes when you have no proof of that at all and you won't until at least June?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: A very short answer to the honourable member: Read the ministerial statements that I've made in this Legislature over the course of the last week or two. She will see an acknowledgment that I have, in fact, not made claims that those are all hired, except that we are working to confirm that information through the course of accountability efforts that we're making with the long-term-care homes. The honourable member makes an allegation, as normal on her part, which bears no recognition even to what I've said. Go back over the last two or three weeks and just simply read.

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: It's not me who has ever been asked to use a polygraph to confirm the veracity of my statements. It is you who has that on your record. You may wish to continue to bring information forward based on misinformation. Simply read my ministerial statements.

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture and Food. Minister, in December you showed some leadership in bringing together the Premier's inaugural food summit. I had a chance to attend part of that, and I thought it was a very successful session. We had some good discussion about concerns and some discussion also about partnership possibilities. Minister, I'm convinced that farm organizations in the food sector can only work toward a sustainable future if we can keep open the lines of communication. Can you update us on the plans for the upcoming second annual Premier's summit?

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I want to say that I'm very proud to be part of a government, and proud to have a Premier like Premier McGuinty, that has a vision for the future. Because unlike the previous government, who slashed and burned budgets and, in particular, slashed and burned the budget of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, by over \$100 million, this is a Premier who has a vision.

The Premier, in calling the Premier's agricultural summit, brought stakeholders together from all over the province, from the agricultural industry and the food

industry and, for the first time ever, had these people speak sitting in a room. The previous government didn't recognize the importance of doing that.

I want to thank the advisory group who have worked so hard, because what they are trying to do, and what the Premier's vision is, is plan for the future. Part of that planning for the future is engaging stakeholders in developing partnerships between producers, processors and governments. The work plan is in process and will be announced shortly, and I want to thank those individuals who spent countless hours on this.

Mr. McMeekin: Minister, as you know, my riding is largely agricultural, and it seems I can go nowhere in my riding without hearing some of the angst of members of the farm community around the high Canadian dollar, the impact of world commodity prices and other global factors.

I know that you want to look at some of the prevalent conditions that need to be corrected in order to make farming more viable, and I'm wondering if you could share with the House, in addition to the plans for the Premier's second ag summit, just what else I can go back and tell my constituents this government is planning to help ensure the prosperity and viability of our important agricultural sector.

1440

Hon. Mr. Peters: I'm really pleased to have a member like we have here, who is consciously and constantly engaging with the farmers. I will be meeting with representatives from his farming community next week, and I want to thank him for that.

Unlike the previous government, we want to help to enhance consumer awareness in this province. Where the previous government cut \$1 million from the Foodland Ontario program, we're not going to do that. We're looking ahead. We're looking at ways in which we can enhance consumer branding in this province. That's why I was pleased last week to see the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex bring forward a resolution as to how we can better brand Ontario products.

We're committed to adding value to commodities in this province. That's why we've moved forward with an ethanol strategy. The previous government sat on their hands and did nothing as far as trying to add value for farmers' commodities. The previous government sat on food safety; they ignored it. They ignored recommendations that went to their cabinet. We're committed to food safety, because all of this ultimately helps to enhance the safety and the quality of product, and makes sure that—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): New question. The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

CANADA-ONTARIO MUNICIPAL RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): Today my question is for the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. I want to begin by saying that we

appreciate very much the grants that we did receive with regard to the COMRIF program. I think that's important. But my question is not about the approvals; my question is about the turndowns, and a couple of significant ones with regard to sewage projects in the towns of Renfrew and Arnprior. I'm going to specifically talk about Arnprior today. Arnprior's application, very solid, is a project that has significant environmental concerns surrounding it. It's of significant environmental importance, Minister. And my question for you today is, given the emphasis that we place on clean water in this province, why would that application have been turned down?

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): My friend the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is dying to answer that question.

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): Let me first of all say that the member is quite correct. There were a number of projects approved in his riding. Let me just enumerate some of these:

For the county of Renfrew, we have a bridge that's worth \$885,000; a solid waste project in the township of Greater Madawaska for \$637,000; a road in the township of McNab/Braeside of \$223,000; and another solid waste project in the township of Whitewater Region.

The reality of the situation is this: There is over \$400 million of projects currently underway as a result of the COMRIF first intake projects. There's much work to be done, but I think we've made an extremely good start here.

Interjection: Don't forget the Pembroke courthouse.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: And the Pembroke courthouse as well. We'll talk about that in the supplementary.

This is the first government to actually try to deal with the infrastructure deficit that that government—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Yakubuski: We're very pleased to have been successful in working with those municipalities toward getting approvals for those COMRIF grants.

But let's get back to the turndown in Arnprior, Minister. The members of council of the town of Arnprior met with myself and the Minister of the Environment at the AMO conference. In fact, later that morning, she cited them as an example of people who are working toward improving water quality and accepting their responsibilities. There's a nice supportive letter here for the application from the Minister of the Environment. Yet this municipality, their pollution control plant, the sewage plant, is under orders from the Ministry of the Environment. With that kind of significant environmental impact that could be felt by the community and those upriver, how do you justify turning down that application? Please answer the question. No more politics. We've got the list. Why did you turn it down? They were told their business plan was strong—

The Speaker: Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: It is quite interesting, the attitude this member seems to be taking today, which certainly wasn't the attitude of the member from Simcoe North, who wrote me, as a matter of fact, a very nice letter and put me in his press release, about projects that were approved in his riding. We thank him for that.

All of the COMRIF projects were decided on a competitive basis. They were adjudicated taking into account safety and health matters and all the other aspects. They were judged on that basis, and the projects were, in effect, approved on that basis. I would strongly suggest to the people of the riding he's talking about, of the project he's talking about, that they apply for intake two, and who knows what will happen at that point in time. But it shows the tremendous infrastructure deficit that was left by the last government. If they had been doing their job for eight years, we would not be in the dire predicament we are in right now with respect to the infrastructure in this province.

CHILD CARE

GARDE D'ENFANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. You told the world that your child care deal is the same as or similar to the one signed by the NDP governments in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. But we know that is not the case. They committed that all new public dollars would be going to the creation of new non-profit child care spaces, when you on the other hand decided to open the floodgates for the for-profit corporations. Isn't that foolish. We all know, and the studies show, that non-profit is not only less expensive but also delivers better quality. You are going to let the for-profit companies have unfettered access to the \$271 million of federal investment and allow them, those private corporations, to fill their private pockets with public dollars. Minister, why are you opening the public purse to for-profit child care corporations?

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I'm very proud to say that last Friday we signed an historic agreement with the federal government that will bring in over \$1.8 billion for child care over the next five years in Ontario. I know the honourable member knows that the not-for-profit and for-profit sectors have both contributed to the child care arena over the last few years and do very good jobs, because they are under the same regulations.

Having said that, I understand the concern of the big-box child care centres coming into Ontario and I can assure the member that that will not happen in this province. There are parts of the province where small private child care centres are the only centres in town. I can provide the list for the member. We cannot close them in order to fulfill an ideology of the NDP. They are the services that those children in those rural areas depend upon. They're under the same good regulations as

the other centres. But we will proceed. I thank her for her concern and assure her that we are looking after that.

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–Baie James): Madame la ministre, vous savez aussi que les ententes au Manitoba et au Saskatchewan sont très différentes envers la communauté francophone, telle que la communauté des Premières Nations, dans le fait que le financement est proportionnel à la population francophone ou autochtone. Allez-vous faire la même chose ici en Ontario, que les communautés francophones et autochtones vont avoir leur juste part du financement, basé sur la population totale de la communauté francophone ou autochtone de la province de l'Ontario?

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: Merci. I'm working on it. I do want to reassure the honourable member that the minister responsible for francophone affairs has brought forward concerns about whether or not this agreement will in fact ensure that children of francophones in this province will be part of this plan and will be fairly part of this plan, and I assure you that that will take place.

CIVIL MARRIAGES

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): It's the month of May and it's springtime and it's the season for love and marriage. So I have a question for the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. Many of us personally know of young couples in our communities who have been unable to have a civil marriage ceremony performed due to the long wait for a justice of the peace or judge. In fact this comes home to my own family, where Dennis, the cousin of my significant other, Andrea, and his now wife, Oma, both of Brampton, had to come to Mississauga in order to get married, and of course in Mississauga we are always welcoming people from Brampton or anyone else to come and get married.

But our justices of the peace or judges are often too busy handling court matters to meet the large demand to perform civil ceremonies. This is typical of the concerns that I hear from my constituents about the need for greater access to civil marriages. Minister, could you please tell me how the government of Ontario has begun to address this problem and to make access to civil marriages easier for Ontarians?

1450

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): I thank the member from Mississauga West. I have to admit I don't have an awful lot of practical experience in the subject of marriage, but I will attempt to answer his question because it is something that is important for the people of Ontario.

I do want to thank the member across the way from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, who certainly brought this issue to bear with respect to his idea vis-à-vis marriage commissioners. The McGuinty government opted for a different route. We thought that by designating city clerks in municipal courts across Ontario it would be a much more cost-effective and efficient manner in allowing those individuals who already have the experience

and the legal training and background to marry individuals in Ontario.

One of the great things about giving these municipalities this authority is that it actually generates revenue for these towns and cities, something that I believe is important so we end the downloading that was—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Supplementary?

Mr. Delaney: Thank you very much, Minister. I know that many municipalities across Ontario have welcomed our new proposals and our regulations. For example, let me quote Roger Anderson, president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. He said, and I use his words, "Municipalities see this as a positive step in providing another level of service for people in our communities." Jack Watson, president of the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario, noted—again, I use his words—"Municipal clerks welcome this opportunity to expand their role in the marriage process and provide a more complete service to those seeking a civil marriage."

Minister, how can an engaged couple find out whether their municipality has extended the ability to solemnize marriages to city clerks?

Hon. Mr. Watson: Again, my thanks to the member from Mississauga West for his question. It is an important issue. Individuals who are interested in determining whether their particular municipality does offer this service simply have to call their city hall or their town hall.

To date, just to give you some statistics, 173 participants representing 126 municipalities have signed up for training. I'm very proud to indicate that 45 municipalities to date have passed resolutions—and that really is all that is required—including my hometown of Ottawa. In fact, just last week the very first couple came forward. I want to congratulate Runrong Peng and Beili Zhou, who were the first couple to be married under this new program brought in by our government. They join a great—

The Speaker: Thank you.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): My question is for the Minister of Health. My question is in regard to the proposed appointees to the LHINs and the role they will play. Will the board chairs have the exclusive authority to (1) create an organizational structure for their LHIN, (2) develop the human resource policies, hire and fire staff within their LHIN, (3) set the staff salary ranges within their LHIN, and (4) approve individual staff salaries?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'm very pleased to take the question from the honourable member and also offer her, if she's going to be performing more work again on the health file, the opportunity for a briefing on this issue, because it's a significant one and obviously would benefit from her expertise as a former Minister of Health.

It's our view, as local health integration networks come forward, that it's important, as we are trying to create more of a systematic performance capacity in health care in Ontario, that we build upon the idea that all parts of the province emerge more equally. Accordingly, we think it's appropriate that we have local health integration networks with structures that are very similar.

The honourable member will see, as we move forward, a strong degree of similarity on all of the points that she raised amongst the LHINs in Ontario.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): In the Speaker's gallery is Ms. Donna O'Neil. Accompanying her is Hugh O'Neil, the former member for Quinte from the 30th to the 35th Parliaments.

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The O'Neils are joined today by 36 outstanding individuals from the city of Burlington who grace us with their presence in the east gallery. I want to welcome them today for their visit to Queen's Park.

The Speaker: That is not a point of order.

PETITIONS

ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which reads as follows:

"Whereas 20% of the adult population or 1.8 million adults in Ontario continue to smoke; and

"Whereas hospitality concepts like bars, pubs, taverns, nightclubs, Legions, bingo halls, racetracks and casinos are businesses with a high percentage of patrons who smoke; and

"Whereas more than 700 businesses in Ontario have invested tens of thousands of dollars each to construct a designated smoking room to comply with municipal bylaws;

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

"Permit properly ventilated and separate designated smoking rooms in hospitality establishments that regulate and control employee and customer exposure to second-hand smoke."

OPTOMETRISTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads:

"Whereas the last funding agreement between the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the Ontario Association of Optometrists (the OAO) expired March 31, 2000; and

"Whereas the optometric fees for OHIP-insured services remain unchanged since 1989; and

"Whereas the lack of any fee increase for 15 years has created a crisis situation for optometrists; and

"Whereas fees for OHIP services do not provide for fair or reasonable compensation for the professional services of optometrists, in that they no longer cover the costs of providing eye examinations; and

"Whereas it is in the best interests of patients and the government to have a new funding agreement for insured services that will ensure that the most vulnerable members of society are able to receive the eye care they need;

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

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care resume negotiations immediately with the OAO and appoint a mediator to help with the negotiation process in order to ensure that optometrists can continue to provide quality eye care services to patients in Ontario."

I send it down by way of Jonathan.

GO TRANSIT TUNNEL

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I do keep getting petitions against the dilapidated bridge near St. Clair Avenue West and Keele Street. The petition is addressed to the Parliament of Ontario, the minister of infrastructure services and the Minister of Transportation, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas GO Transit is presently planning a tunnel in an area just south of St. Clair Avenue West and west of Old Weston Road, making it easier for GO trains to pass a major rail crossing; and

"Whereas the TTC is presently planning a TTC right-of-way along all of St. Clair Avenue West, including the bottleneck caused by the dilapidated St. Clair Avenue and Old Weston Road bridge; and

"Whereas this bridge ... will be (1) too narrow for the planned TTC right-of-way, since it will leave only one lane for traffic; (2) it is not safe for pedestrians (it's about 50 metres long). It's dark and slopes on both the east and west sides, creating high banks for 300 metres; and (3) it creates a divide, a no man's land, between Old Weston Road and Keele Street. (This was acceptable when the area consisted entirely of slaughterhouses, but now the area has 900 new homes);

"Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that GO Transit extend the tunnel beyond St. Clair Avenue West so that trains will pass under St. Clair Avenue West, thus eliminating this eyesore of a bridge with its high banks and blank walls. Instead, it will create a dynamic, revitalized community enhanced by a beautiful, continuous cityscape with easy traffic flow."

Since I agree with this petition 100%, I am delighted to sign my name.

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have here a petition signed by a lot of farmers, including a lot of

members from the Minister of Agriculture and Food's riding. It is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas thousands of Ontario farmers have been forced to take their concerns directly to Queen's Park because of a lack of response from the Dalton McGuinty government to farm issues; and

"Whereas farming in Ontario is in crisis because of the impacts of BSE, unfair subsidies from other jurisdictions, rising costs for energy and a crushing regulatory burden on farmers; and

"Whereas current prices for farm products do not allow for sustainable agriculture in Canada, with a 10.7% decline in the number of Canadian farms reported between 1996 and 2001;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to consult with Ontario's farmers to develop a long-term strategy to ensure the viability of agriculture in our province that protects our rural way of life, and to work in the short term to alleviate the farm income crisis and listen to the concerns of farmers about the greenbelt."

I affix my signature to the petition, as I totally agree with it.

1500

PENSION PLANS

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I have a petition here that was provided to me by Tony Martin, an excellent MP for the riding of Sault Ste. Marie. He gathered these signatures to come to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and the petition reads:

"Whereas it has been more than 15 years since the last significant reform of Ontario's pension laws;

"Whereas the New Democratic Party believes that all Ontarians who have worked hard all their lives should be able to live out their retirement years with dignity and security;

"Whereas the fact that 60% of Ontarians are not covered by a workplace-based pension plan of any kind is simply unacceptable;

"Whereas the fact that 83% of workers in the private sector who do have pensions have absolutely no inflation protection and will inevitably see their pension benefits seriously eroded over their retirement period; and

"Whereas Ontario's pension backup, the pension benefits guarantee fund, only guarantees benefits up to \$1,000 a month and excludes multi-employer plans; and

"Whereas pension plan members now have to wait two full years before they are able to take their employer's contributions to their plans with them if they leave;

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

"To immediately establish a special legislative committee to examine pension issues and recommend real reforms to protect pensions and ensure all Ontarians dignity and security upon retirement.

"To support a plan of meaningful pension reform as proposed by Howard Hampton and the NDP whereby:

"All plan members receiving benefits under a defined benefit pension plan in Ontario would receive some inflation protection;

"The pension benefits guarantee fund would be increased to \$2,500 a month and multi-employer plans would be covered as well;

"Members would have immediate ownership over all contributions to their plan; and

"Measures would be taken to increase the proportion of workers covered by workplace-based pension plans."

I agree with this and have affixed my signature.

ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, signed by Stephen and Deborah Kwinter of Timber Mill Court in Mississauga and some of their friends and neighbours, to ban smoking in public places in Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas some 16,000 Ontarians each year die of tobacco-related causes; and

"Whereas the inhalation of direct and second-hand tobacco smoke both lead to health hazards that can and do cause preventable death; and

"Whereas more than four out of every five Ontarians do not smoke, and this large majority desires that enclosed public places in Ontario be smoke-free at all times; and

"Whereas preventing the sale of tobacco products, especially to young people, and banning the use of tobacco products in public and gathering places of all types will lower the incidence of smoking among Ontarians and decrease preventable deaths;

"Be it therefore resolved that the Ontario Legislative Assembly enact Bill 164, and that the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care aggressively implement measures to restrict the sale and supply of tobacco to those under 25; that the display of tobacco products in retail settings be banned; that smoking be banned in enclosed public places or in workplaces, and banned on or near the grounds of public and private schools, hospitals and day nurseries; that designated smoking areas or rooms in public places be banned, and that penalties for violations of smoking laws be substantially increased."

I completely agree with this petition. I'm pleased to affix my signature, and I ask Nathan to carry it for me.

TAXATION

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): This is a petition on taxpayer protection. People are still smarting from the 2004 budget, and we're going to hear the 2005 budget today.

"Whereas the McGuinty government's 2004 budget will break the taxpayer protection law by not conducting a referendum on tax increases; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty signed an election pledge on September 11, 2003, not to raise taxes without the explicit consent of voters through a referendum; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government’s 2004 budget raised taxes while reducing access to key health care services by eliminating OHIP coverage for basic medical treatment such as routine eye exams, chiropractic and physiotherapy services; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised in TV ads not to raise taxes by one penny on working families; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty pledged in writing to obey the taxpayer protection law, which requires a referendum before increasing taxes;

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

“Please ensure that all of the McGuinty government’s tax increases are put before the people of Ontario in the form of a referendum.”

I’ve signed that.

CREDIT VALLEY HOSPITAL

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition here to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, from Julia Ballard of Eastridge road, and Joanne Carruthers of Bartholomew Crescent, both in my home neighbourhood of Meadowvale in Mississauga. It reads as follows:

“Whereas some 20,000 people each year choose to make their home in Mississauga, and a Halton-Peel District Health Council capacity study stated that the Credit Valley Hospital should be operating 435 beds by now, and 514 beds by 2016; and

“Whereas the Credit Valley Hospital bed count has remained constant at 365 beds since its opening in November 1985, even though some 4,800 babies are delivered each year at the Credit Valley Hospital in a facility designed to handle 2,700 births annually; and

“Whereas donors in Mississauga and the regional municipalities served by the Credit Valley Hospital have contributed more than \$41 million of a \$50-million fundraising objective, the most ambitious of any community hospital in the country, to support the construction of an expanded facility able to meet the needs of our community;

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

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care undertake specific measures to ensure the allocation of capital funds for the construction of A and H block at Credit Valley Hospital to ensure the ongoing acute care needs of the patients and families served by the hospital are met in a timely and professional manner, to reduce wait times for patients in the hospital emergency department, and to better serve patients in the community in Halton and Peel regions by reducing severe overcrowding in the labour and delivery suite.”

I completely agree with this. I support my local hospital. I affix my signature and ask Derek to carry it for me.

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.”

As I am in agreement, I will affix my signature and give this to Madison.

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I received this petition from the Doversquare Tenants Association and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the so-called Tenant Protection Act of the defeated Harris-Eves Tories has allowed landlords to increase rents well above the rate of inflation for new and old tenants alike;

“Whereas the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal (OVRT) created by this act regularly awards major and permanent additional rent increases to landlords...;

“Whereas our landlord, Sterling Karamar Property Management, has applied to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) to add a fourth high-rise unit to our compound in order to circumvent city of Toronto restrictions on density and the city’s opposition to its project;

“Whereas this project would lead to overcrowding in our densely populated community, reduce our precious green space, further drive up rents and do nothing to solve the crisis in affordable rental housing” in our area;

“Whereas this project will drive away longer-term tenants partially shielded from the post-1998 Harris-Eves rent increases, thereby further reducing the number of relatively affordable units in the city core; and

“Whereas before October 2003 ... ‘real protection for tenants at all times’” was necessary;

“Whereas our own MPP ... called for a rent rollback...;

“We, the undersigned, residents of Doversquare Apartments in Toronto, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

“To institute a rent freeze until the exorbitant Tory guideline and above-guideline rent increases are wiped out by inflation;

“To abrogate the Harris-Eves ‘Tenant Protection Act’ and draw up new landlord-tenant legislation which shuts down the notoriously pro-landlord ORHT and reinstates real rent control....”

I’ll sign this petition and ask you to take it to the Speaker.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent to suspend proceedings until 4 p.m.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

This House is in recess until 4 o’clock. At 3:55, I will cause the bells to ring for five minutes, inviting all members to return for orders of the day.

The House suspended proceedings from 1510 to 1600.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2005 ONTARIO BUDGET

BUDGET DE L’ONTARIO DE 2005

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by Mr. McGuinty, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Mr. Sorbara has moved, seconded by Mr. McGuinty, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

May I have the indulgence of the House so that the pages can deliver the budget to each member.

I am confident that all members have received copies of the budget.

The Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, when our government was sworn into office just 19 months ago, we pledged to work as hard as the 12.5 million people we serve:

- to fix their schools;
- to improve their health care; and
- to strengthen the economy of this magnificent province.

One year ago, I presented a plan to turn that commitment into reality. Today, I am here to report to the people of Ontario that we have made real progress. Here are just a few examples:

- Class sizes in the early grades are smaller, there are more teachers, and test scores are higher;
- Family health teams are now starting up around the province;
- An historic 1.8-million-acre greenbelt now provides a buffer defining the rapidly growing greater Toronto area; and
- Our auto strategy is leveraging \$3.5 billion worth of new investment.

All of this, Mr. Speaker, while we have seen the economy create 146,000 new jobs since we took office.

All of this while cutting in half the deficit that was predicted for 2004-05.

Je suis fier de la bonne performance de la province durant notre première année à la barre du gouvernement.

I am proud of how well the province has done in our first full year. The results are clear. Our plan is sound. Our plan is working. Our plan is working because we are working with the people of Ontario to form new partnerships.

We have formed new partnerships with students, parents and teachers; with patients, doctors, nurses and other health care professionals; with farmers and with business people.

Today, I am here to introduce to the people of Ontario the next phase of our plan to strengthen our province by investing in our people. It’s a plan to deliver better schools for better learning, better health care for healthier Ontarians, smart investment in infrastructure for a stronger economy, and strong, competent financial management. I am here to announce to the people of Ontario historic new investments in universities, colleges and training—the most significant in 40 years.

Je suis également fier d’annoncer aujourd’hui de nouveaux investissements historiques dans les universités, les collèges et les programmes de formation.

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Before I outline the details, I want to underline what lies at the heart of this budget—and that is fiscal discipline.

The deficit for last year was \$3 billion—some \$2.5 billion less than what we inherited from our predecessors.

We accomplished this because the economy performed better than expected. Our revenues—particularly corporate tax revenues—were higher. Our interest costs—through better debt management and interest rates—were lower. We did not have to use our reserve. And we imposed discipline on the management of our resources right across government.

We watched every penny. So the deficit is smaller. But it has not disappeared. Far from it. We are still working our way through a structural deficit that continues to threaten our ability to fund the public services that the people of this great province depend upon.

Our plan shows that—at the latest—we will have a balanced budget in 2008-09. It may be possible to get there in 2007-08, if we don’t need our reserve. But we will only get there if we continue to make discipline our watchword and hold the line on spending in most ministries.

On that point, I want to thank my cabinet and caucus colleagues for their support and their discipline.

I also want to thank the many Ontarians who spoke to us, often with great conviction and passion, during our pre-budget hearings. We heard every request. Unfortunately, we cannot grant every request. We simply do not have the financial resources to do so.

To govern is to choose.

We have chosen to invest in Ontarians’ priorities—health, education and prosperity—and to do so without introducing any new taxes or tax increases.

Nous avons choisi d'investir dans les priorités de la population de l'Ontario—soit la santé, l'éducation et la prospérité—et ce, sans augmenter les impôts ou les taxes.

We have chosen to invest in the future. And we believe we have chosen well.

From Mowat to Davis to McGuinty, our greatest Premiers have made public education their highest priority. Our future demands this approach.

In today's knowledge economy, education is the prerequisite for prosperity. The brains and know-how of a skilled workforce are the economic edge of the 21st century.

So, if we are to continue to compete with our neighbours to the south and take on the rapidly growing economies of Brazil and Russia, India and China, we simply must equip ourselves with the skills to compete.

That is why an investment in post-secondary education today is an investment in jobs for tomorrow. But education is more than an economic imperative. It is the measure of our commitment to opportunity—it's the foundation of an engaged citizenry and a strong democracy. Education stands at the centre of our plan.

I am therefore honoured to announce Reaching Higher: the McGuinty government plan for post-secondary education. It is an unprecedented investment in higher education.

We will invest an additional \$6.2 billion in our universities, our colleges, our training system, our apprenticeships and our students.

D'ici 2009-2010, nous consacrerons 6,2 milliards de dollars supplémentaires à nos universités, nos collèges, nos programmes de formation, nos programmes d'apprentissage et nos étudiantes et étudiants.

In return for this massive investment, we will demand more access, higher quality and better accountability.

By access, we mean more student assistance, more student places and more opportunities for new Canadians. By quality, we mean more resources, more faculty, more time for students with faculty and more innovative research. And by accountability, we mean agreements and follow-up that ensure that greater investment equals greater results.

One year ago, we asked former Premier Bob Rae to conduct a review of post-secondary education, and I want to publicly thank Mr. Rae and his advisory panel for the depth of their insight and the dispatch with which they delivered their report. They're with us in the gallery today. Informed by that report, we are now implementing our plan.

New investments are already underway. New funding began last year, with an additional \$200 million. And we'll be adding \$683 million this year. By 2009-10, our annual spending on post-secondary education will be \$1.6 billion higher than was originally planned for in the 2004 budget.

We believe, as Ontarians believe, that if you have the marks, you deserve the opportunity. So I'm pleased that Reaching Higher will double the funding available for student assistance—improving assistance for some

135,000 students starting this year. We believe as well that, once you get the opportunity, you deserve a quality education.

Our investment represents a 35% increase in operating funding for institutions.

Nous proposons aussi de faire des investissements ciblés pour améliorer l'éducation des autochtones et des francophones, et les perspectives des étudiantes et des étudiants de la première génération, des néo-Canadiennes et des néo-Canadiens ainsi que des personnes ayant un handicap.

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Mr. Speaker, the foundation for the success of students begins in the early years. That is why we are so enthusiastic about our Best Start program. Best Start will significantly increase child care spaces for children in junior and senior kindergarten and make child care fee subsidies available to far more families.

And let us give credit where credit is due: The federal government will help—starting with an additional \$272 million this year. With federal funding, our province's investment will double by 2007-08. It will make Best Start a reality.

Getting our children off to the best start is one thing. Providing them with the best schools is another.

Our plan is to make public education the best education.

We want our students to be able to read, write and do math at a high level of comprehension by age 12. We want more students to stay in school so that they're learning to age 18 and beyond. In just 19 months, we've come a long way:

—This year, close to 60% of grade 6 students met the provincial standard in reading and math—that's real progress from last year;

—Our grade 10 students' scores are up this year as well;

—One in three schools in Ontario now boasts smaller class sizes in the earlier years;

—We've trained 8,000 lead teachers in best practices and we're training 8,000 more; and

—We have brought peace and stability to our education system.

These changes are being felt all across Ontario. But don't take my word for it—ask Marie Braz. She's a grade 3 teacher at Indian Road Crescent Junior Public School in Toronto. She told us that having fewer students in her classroom this year—thanks to the additional teachers we funded—has made a huge difference to her, but most especially to her students.

We will provide a 15% increase in education funding over the four years of the plan, and that will support:

—programs to improve reading, writing and math;

—Good Places to Learn—that's our fund for repairing and renewing our schools;

—the next steps toward achieving a cap of 20 students per class in the earlier years; and

—programs to keep students learning, at least until age 18.

A good education doesn't always mean learning in a traditional classroom. It also means high-quality apprenticeship programs and workplace training. So this budget provides for \$17.5 million by 2007-08 in new funding to support greater access to labour-market services.

Last year, we introduced a significant new apprenticeship training tax credit for businesses. This year, we're doing more to integrate new Canadians into Ontario's workplaces. We have:

- bridge training programs which will help skilled people move more quickly into the labour market;

- pilot projects which will help increase access to college programs; and

- the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council, which will create new links with employers across the greater Toronto area.

Let me now turn to health care.

Ontarians' greatest asset is their health. And our government's plan is to do more to help people stay healthy, to provide better care if they do become sick, and to do what is necessary to ensure that medicare is sustained for generations to come.

Our plan includes a \$32.9-billion investment in health care in the current year.

But spending alone is not the answer. That's why our plan includes more doctors and nurses, shorter wait times and a plan to keep Ontarians healthier.

Voilà pourquoi notre plan comprend l'accroissement du nombre de médecins et d'infirmières, la réduction des temps d'attente et la promotion de la santé des Ontariennes et des Ontariens.

Already, we have made progress, great progress:

- We have more than doubled the number of training spots for international medical graduates;

- In the fall, students will begin studying at a new medical school in northern Ontario;

- We will be increasing first-year medical school spaces by 15%;

- We have provided funding for more than 3,000 new nursing positions in hospitals, long-term-care homes, home care and community agencies; and

- We have approved some 52 new family health teams and three networks of health teams.

These steps are particularly important and will have a particularly strong impact in underserved areas.

Families are excited about these reforms. So are family physicians. One of them, Dr. Kathryn Lockington from Kingston, tells us—and I'm using her words here now—that this is going to help her provide the best possible care for her patients, by sharing that care with nurses, dieticians, mental health workers and other health care professionals.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Lockington, who joins us in the gallery today, and through her, Ontario's vast network of health care providers, who are embracing this very project.

Our plan to reduce wait times is working:

- We're updating equipment and we're adding hours of service;

- We're providing thousands more cancer, cataract, and hip and knee replacement surgeries;

- We're increasing the number of MRI exams by almost 14%; and

- We've provided some 81,000 CT scans, an increase of 8%.

We're making a difference.

We're also investing in keeping Ontarians healthier:

- We've provided three new vaccines free of charge for children. That's saving families up to \$600 per child.

- Our Smoke-Free Ontario Act is making its way through the Legislature.

- We're encouraging healthier practices in our schools by banning junk food and launching Pause to Play, a physical activity program. A couple of us took a Pause to Play catch on the front lawn yesterday. Would you consider that leading by example?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): Absolutely.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: OK, I have his permission to play on the front lawn.

- We're increasing the provincial government share of public health funding from 50% to 75% by January 2007.

We're working to help health care providers develop long-term plans. Starting this year, we will, for the first time, begin to provide multi-year, hospital-by-hospital funding across the province.

We are also introducing 14 local health integration networks—LHINs, as they're known—based on the simple principle that local people are best able to identify and determine local priorities.

We'll be providing tens of thousands more procedures and reporting regularly on our wait-time progress on the health ministry Web site. We'll be creating more family health teams to expand integrated primary care.

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In summary, medicare is a profound expression of who we are as Ontarians. That is why this government is so committed to continuous improvement of our health care for today's patients and to sustainability of health care for generations to come.

The strength of Ontario's economy is critical to our ability to finance not just health care and education but all of the public services provided by the province. Before I outline the important steps that we are taking to strengthen our economy, let me quickly survey our economic environment.

We're predicting that the economy will grow by 2% this year, 2.8% in 2006 and an average of 3.4% annually in 2007 and 2008. The average private sector forecast is somewhat more aggressive, but we prefer to be cautious.

However, even with our prudent assumptions, Ontario is expected to create some 65,000 new jobs in 2005 and 118,000 jobs in 2006.

With steady gains in employment, overall personal income is expected to increase 3.8% this year and an average of 4.9% through 2006-08.

There are a variety of uncertainties beyond our borders and beyond our control, including, of course, the rising price of oil, the potential weakening of the US economy, higher interest rates and the appreciation of the Canadian dollar. We will obviously continue to monitor these risks as we proceed to implement our plan.

Our plan to strengthen the economy is comprehensive:

- the five-year, \$6.2-billion investment in Reaching Higher, which I described earlier;
- a five-year, \$30-billion investment in infrastructure;
- a sustainable, reliable electricity sector;
- a modern, competitive tax environment—this budget contains, as I said, no new taxes and no tax increases;
- a modernized regulatory environment—we're pursuing a multi-year plan to update Ontario's commercial law framework and we're launching an agency to champion small business interests;
- targeted investments in key economic sectors;
- expansion of Ontario's research and development capacity; and
- steps to unlock the economic potential of Ontario's regions and municipalities.

A healthy business climate depends on infrastructure that is modern, reliable, efficient and affordable. Our five-year, \$30-billion infrastructure investment plan will involve both long-overdue projects and urgent new initiatives:

- highway construction in northern and southern Ontario;
- improvements in schools, colleges and universities;
- dozens of expansions and improvements to our hospitals; and
- major investments in public transit.

To help municipalities get infrastructure projects off the ground and, indeed, on occasion, in the ground, we are making available low-cost, long-term loans through the Ontario Strategic Infrastructure Financing Authority.

Already, 166 municipalities are proceeding with some 1,000 local infrastructure projects such as roads and bridges and water and waste water facilities.

With this budget, OSIFA's mandate will be broadened to provide loans for culture, tourism and recreation projects in municipalities. Later this year, OSIFA financing will be made available to Ontario universities.

We are also inviting Ontarians to join in these great projects.

Today I am announcing that Ontario residents will have the opportunity to invest in infrastructure projects by purchasing infrastructure renewal bonds. These bonds will go on sale later this year and will provide a solid investment for Ontarians across the province.

At the same time, this government is exploring ways to accelerate our infrastructure plan. We're looking at ways to encourage Ontario's pension plans to invest more in building Ontario's infrastructure rather than investing their money abroad.

And, may I remind members, a review of major government assets continues. However, our commitment remains the same: Any net proceeds generated from asset

sales would be directed as a first priority to infrastructure.

There are certain core principles that will guide both funding and procurement:

- The public interest must be paramount;
- Value for money must be demonstrable; and
- Processes must be fair, open and transparent.

Local communities are where our economy gathers force. Over the last 19 months, we have worked with municipalities and we've made real progress.

We are the first government in the history of Ontario to deliver gas tax dollars for public transit—\$193 million this year and \$1.5 billion over the next five years.

We introduced the Ontario municipal partnership fund, the province's largest transfer payment to municipalities—\$656 million this year.

And as you know, we are in the process of uploading a greater share of the cost of public health, which will support our goals of healthier Ontarians and more financially stable municipalities.

Municipalities have also told us that they need more affordable housing.

Just days ago, this government signed an important Canada-Ontario affordable housing agreement. It will help provide 15,000 new units of affordable housing including units for people with mental illnesses, victims of domestic violence and people in remote communities. It will help thousands of people acquire a safe, decent place to call home.

Monsieur le Président, l'économie du nord de l'Ontario a toujours présenté des défis et des possibilités uniques.

I was saying that the economy of northern Ontario has always presented unique challenges and opportunities. Our government is responding to those challenges and enhancing those opportunities.

This year, we're investing \$485 million in northern infrastructure—including \$297 million to renew and expand northern highways.

Our northern medical school is set to open and we're starting a new northern Ontario nursing education program.

We are providing \$20 million in new funding by 2007-08 to increase access to high-quality community college programs in northern and rural Ontario. We are supporting the mining sector by investing \$15 million over three years in geological mapping.

And we are working on ways to strengthen the forest products sector. It's a very important industry for Ontario—it employs almost 30,000 people in the north.

1640

I'm also pleased to report that our grow bonds pilot program—we announced that in last year's budget—has been very successful. Grow bonds will provide almost \$13 million in investment in new and expanding northern Ontario businesses.

Turning to agriculture, Mr. Speaker, I don't need to remind you that agriculture makes a significant contribution to the economy and the social well-being of every

Ontarian. The agri-food sector accounts for almost \$8.6 billion in exports. But it's also facing some very real challenges: low grain and oilseed prices, and the unfair interruption of our cattle and beef trade.

To build on our strengths and cope with these challenges, we have provided more than \$170 million in support for grain and oilseed farmers, and up to \$30 million to facilitate the recovery of our cattle industry.

We're moving forward with the new renewable fuel standard for ethanol. That's good news for the air that we breathe and for our farmers across the province.

And I just want to mention that in keeping with one of the themes of the recent Premier's agricultural summit—that is, the need for innovation in farming—I am pleased to tell you that we are establishing a new chair in agricultural research at the University of Guelph.

Research is at the core of intelligent societies. It nourishes excellence. It inspires advancement and productivity gains. It's the fuel of our economic engine.

So I am delighted today to announce that we are proposing the creation of the Research Council of Ontario. J'ai donc le grand plaisir aujourd'hui d'annoncer que nous proposons de créer le Conseil ontarien de la recherche. The Council's job will be to advise on research priorities, to help coordinate public research and to raise Ontario's profile as an international research centre. I believe the council will serve as a beacon focusing the world's attention on Ontario's abilities.

As a first step, we are consolidating several research expenditures into the new Ontario research fund.

We are also supporting research with investments in MARS, the medical and related science discovery district right here in Toronto, and in the McMaster innovation park in Hamilton. We are establishing—

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: I think I'm hearing from Hamilton.

We are establishing a new chair in productivity and competitiveness at the University of Toronto.

Again, our intention is to develop a global reputation for the depth and breadth of our research capacity.

Our entertainment and creative cluster already has a global reputation. This cluster brings together talent and technology and creates jobs. So investment in culture is an investment in both community building and economic growth.

That's why, in December, we announced an increase in tax credits for Ontario's film and television industry. That's a sector that generates \$2 billion each year for our economy and employs some 20,000 people. As a result of this announcement, more than a dozen film and television productions have started up and a dozen more are being scouted.

We've also committed \$25 million toward the construction of a permanent home for the renowned Toronto International Film Festival.

As well, this budget proposes enhancements to the tax credits available for computer animation, interactive digital media, book publishing and sound recording to

encourage these high-profile and high-potential industries.

Finally, on the economic front, this government is determined to get the best possible advice it can to shape the new Ontario economy. So it is with pleasure that I announce today the H. Ian Macdonald visiting economist fellowship within the Ministry of Finance. Professor Macdonald has made an enduring mark on public administration in Ontario as an economist, as a deputy minister and as president of York University, where he continues to teach today.

Our first visiting economist will be Tim O'Neill, the former executive vice-president and chief economist of the Bank of Montreal. We are looking forward to Mr. O'Neill's insights on strengthening Ontario's economy.

Our plan is working because of the discipline that we have brought to the management of our finances.

As I mentioned earlier, the deficit for last year is \$3 billion—some \$2.5 billion less than what we inherited from our predecessors. The deficit for 2005-06 will be \$2.8 billion and will steadily decline thereafter.

Given our progress, it would have been possible to project a balanced budget by 2007-08. Instead, we have chosen to invest in what Ontarians value: their education and their health care. We believe these are the right choices.

But even with our investments, we will eliminate the deficit by 2008-09 at the latest. And it may be possible to get there in 2007-08 if we do not need to use our reserve.

We will be investing in priority areas, but we will be holding the line on costs in most ministries. We will continue to be focused and continue to be disciplined.

And because of our Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, all of our numbers will be subject to the scrutiny of the Auditor General and the public before the next election.

Finally, I want to point out that our ability to invest in Ontario's future prosperity continues to be compromised by the difference between what the federal government collects from Ontarians and what it returns to the province.

The government of Ontario and third parties such as CIBC World Markets and others have identified a \$23-billion gap in that regard. We have begun engaging the federal government on this issue, and we have had some early success. But more needs to be done if we are to ensure a stronger Ontario in a stronger Canada.

If the gap is narrowed, we can accelerate, and even expand, our plan. But our plan can't wait—because the people of Ontario can't wait. We are delivering the very best for Ontarians within our financial constraints. We are improving services and at the same time we are reducing the deficit. Both can be done. Both have to be done.

1650

Mr. Speaker, before I conclude, permit me, if you will, to thank some very important people.

Just a few days ago we celebrated the 60th anniversary of VE Day—and 2005, as you know, is the Year of the

Veteran. We wouldn't be here today, with the rich opportunities we're blessed with, were it not for the sacrifices of those men and women more than 60 years ago.

Among those men and women, if you'll permit me, I'd like to mention my late father-in-law, Ted Barlow. He survived the horrors of war in the Far East, returned to Canada to till the soil and raise a wonderful family. He taught us all about the power of courage in the face of unspeakable hardship. We stand here today because Ted Barlow and his fellow soldiers stood up for democracy then. So to the veterans in the gallery and their relatives—I include my mother-in-law, Oda Barlow—we say thank you.

Applause.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: A tremendously dedicated team of public servants in the Ministry of Finance, led by Deputy Minister Colin Andersen, have worked diligently on the design of this budget. I want to express my sincere gratitude to all of them, and I would like to pay special tribute to one in particular.

For the past 32 years, Tom Sweeting, assistant deputy minister, budget and taxation, has helped to shape this province's budgetary policies. This is his 32nd budget. On behalf of the government, I would like to thank Tom for his outstanding commitment, his keen intelligence and his unfailing humour.

And through you, Tom, I would like to pay tribute to the tens of thousands of men and women in the Ontario public service who have dedicated their careers to serving the people of this province. You have been an example to all of us.

Mr. Speaker, as the Premier has so often said, our people are our greatest asset.

L'atout le plus précieux de l'Ontario est sa population.

Today we are implementing our plan to invest in their future: in better education from the early years to the most sophisticated graduate degree, in more timely and

more compassionate health care, and in a stronger, more productive economy.

In doing so, I believe that we unlock Ontario's great potential and ensure that this province is the place to be now and for decades to come.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the debate.

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

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, I request that the House revert to introduction of bills.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BUDGET MEASURES ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005

SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES

Mr Sorbara moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 197, An Act to implement Budget measures /
Projet de loi 197, Loi mettant en oeuvre certaines
mesures budgétaires.

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

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I move adjournment of the House.

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

This House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

Interjections: Until 10 o'clock.

The Speaker: Please don't be late: 10 a.m. of the clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1658.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller

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Beaches–East York / Beaches–York–Est	Prue, Michael (ND)	Hamilton West / Hamilton–Ouest	Marsales, Judy (L)
Bramalea–Gore–Malton– Springdale	Kular, Kuldip (L)	Hastings–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (L) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
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Brampton West–Mississauga / Brampton–Ouest–Mississauga	Dhillon, Vic (L)	Kenora–Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (L) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
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Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
Chatham–Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Lanark–Carleton	Sterling, Norman W. (PC)
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Leeds–Grenville	Runciman, Robert W. (PC)
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Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Guelph–Wellington	Sandals, Liz (L)	Nipissing	Smith, Monique M. (L)
Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Northumberland	Rinaldi, Lou (L)
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Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (L) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
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Ottawa–Vanier	Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (L) Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Toronto Centre–Rosedale / Toronto-Centre–Rosedale	Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (L) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
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Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)		

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

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

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Règlements et projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Mario G. Racco, Khalil Ramal, Kathleen O.Wynne
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

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M. Sorbara.....	6995
Débat ajourné.....	7000