



No. 9A

N° 9A

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly
of Ontario
Second Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario
Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 25 October 2005

Mardi 25 octobre 2005

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Tuesday 25 October 2005

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Mardi 25 octobre 2005

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

VERNON WHITE

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I'm very pleased to rise in this House today to recognize Vernon White, the new chief for the Durham Regional Police Service. He succeeds Kevin McAlpine, who has retired after 33 years of distinguished service in policing. Chief White comes to Durham region after a 24-year distinguished career with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. He has served as assistant commissioner of National Police Services in Ottawa. I look forward to co-hosting a town hall to welcome the new chief to Scugog on Monday, November 7.

I was pleased to join our new chief and many other distinguished guests for the Durham Regional Police Association dinner and awards banquet held October 20. I joined our new Chief White as well as retired Chief McAlpine in recognizing those honoured with police recognition awards. These included Sergeant Pat Davidson, Constables Dave Redwood, Glen Turpin, Darryl Rice, Todd Gribbons, Ryan Huxter, Leon Presner, Catherine Cornes and Rui Ferreira, as well as civilian staff member Samantha Cutajar.

I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome Chief Vernon White to his new post and to pay tribute to those honoured at last week's recognition ceremony. These brave men and women put themselves in danger to serve and protect each of us. Let's keep that in mind as we recognize the services that police contribute to our community.

McMASTER UNIVERSITY

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): I have frequently spoken to the leadership and innovation which is exemplified by McMaster University, but I rise today to acknowledge McMaster's celebrating the men, women and corporations who have helped Mac along the way.

We hear today of the issue of donor fatigue. Sometimes a thank you goes a long way, and McMaster recently did just that as they celebrated the 25th anniversary of the president's club, which is the equivalent of a large public thank you: a public acknowledgement of those who go above and beyond by helping us build a better McMaster to build a better community.

On Sunday, October 2, I had the pleasure of attending McMaster University's President's Club annual reception. Members joined together to commemorate this event at the Donaldson Family Marketplace in the heart of the McMaster student centre. The president's club was established in 1980 with the purpose of encouraging and recognizing extraordinary contributions from alumni, faculty, staff, parents and friends of McMaster. Its membership has now grown to 1,400. It is the generosity of these members that has helped to make McMaster University the state-of-the-art institution it is today.

The president's club is part of the proud tradition of leadership and philanthropy at McMaster University, and I congratulate its members for their commitment to one of Canada's premier universities. Earlier this year, it received the largest gift in Canadian history, of \$105 million from Michael G. DeGroote and family. More recently, we received another large gift, a \$10-million contribution from Tim Hortons founder Ron Joyce, which will go toward the construction of a brand new stadium.

Hats off to McMaster.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I rise today to share my thoughts about the terrible conditions facing the First Nation community of Kashechewan. It is unimaginable that in this country where we are privileged to have an abundant supply of fresh water, communities could live with water that is so contaminated. It is even more distressing to me that both the province and the federal government had identified problems with the drinking water systems in this community, and neither took action.

First Nation communities are continually falling through the cracks. My own experience with the provincial government is that they do not recognize these communities as municipalities. In fact, they do not recognize these communities at all.

Certainly the federal government has a responsibility to First Nations to act responsibly and to ensure the most basic of necessities are provided for its citizens. Currently over 100 First Nation communities across Canada must boil their drinking water, and over half are located in rural and remote locations in Ontario. As a country that prides itself on the aid it sends around the world, it is unconscionable that this situation could happen in our own country.

As members of provincial Parliament, it is incumbent that we be activists for the communities we represent. I call on the province to show leadership on this issue and to provide both technical support and assistance to the community of Kashechewan.

ARIE NERMAN

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): Today I rise to pay tribute to a gentleman in our community by the name of Arie Nerman. Arie Nerman has been a 30-year resident of the Beach and was this year honoured as the Beaches–East York Citizen of the Year.

He is known around the Beach community for his many good works, but I think of particular importance to our community is that he arrived in the Beach some 30 years ago. He was, as he describes it himself, a non-observant Jew. He lived there for about two years, only to discover that there was a synagogue two streets away from him that he wasn't even aware of. He went there and it was not functioning. He helped to rebuild it. They were having problems getting the 10 men present to have a minian and could not do it, but he has rebuilt it so that today there are 250 members of the synagogue and it has become, really, a Beach institution. They minister not only to the congregation but to the wider community. Mr. Nerman is active in the interfaith lunch program feeding the hungry. He does historical walks in our community. He is at the annual Remembrance Day service and at the 9/11 ceremony in the Beach, and he gives talks on anti-racism and anti-Semitism.

He is truly a fitting representative for the Beach. We are so very proud of the work he has done and so very proud of his being one of our neighbours and this year's recipient of the Beaches–East York Citizen of the Year.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): The week of October 17 celebrated the libraries of this province and the great services they and the people who work in them provide to the people of Ontario.

It was also a special cause for celebration in the city of Cornwall in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh. It was during that week that the people of Cornwall celebrated the 110th anniversary of their public library. Officially born on October 7, 1895, this library has been a pillar of the Cornwall community for its entire life and will undoubtedly continue to play that role for generations to come.

1340

It has evolved from a small, quiet facility to a thriving centre of the community in the heart of the city, downtown Cornwall. Parents have introduced their children to the enriching world of literature, science and history in the hallowed halls of the library, probably unaware of the historical figures who had visited before them.

Nobel Prize winner and former Prime Minister of Canada Lester B. Pearson once visited the Cornwall

library, having been there in 1967 for the opening at one of its previous locations, as was Angus Mowat, father of our great Canadian author Farley Mowat.

The Cornwall library is truly at the heart of the community and in the heart of its citizens. It gives me great pleasure to acknowledge the library, in the city of Cornwall and throughout my constituency, and all those who work hard to make it what it is—the staff, the board and especially the “friends of the library” volunteers. Their contributions have made a difference in enriching the cultural heritage of the city.

HEALTH CARE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): Today I rise to update members of the Legislature on the negative outcome for patients of the McGuinty Liberals' decision to shut down the independent Ontario joint replacement registry, the OJRR, and transfer it to the Canadian joint replacement registry, the CJRR. This registry collected wait times data on hip and knee arthroplasties. This decision was accompanied by a promise from the minister in this House on June 8 that “important quality data are not lost.” This data helped to reduce the need for redo surgeries, which take longer to recover from and are more invasive and costly.

On October 1 of this year, the OJRR was shut down by the McGuinty Liberals and the collection of data was supposedly transferred to the CJRR. Guess what? As of October 24, not a single surgical case had been submitted to the CJRR. This is contrary to Minister Smitherman's commitment that “We will make sure that the value of the data they collect continues to be made available to the Ontario health care system.”

If the McGuinty Liberal government has broken its promise to make this data available, how can anyone believe that they will reduce wait times? In reality, we know the opposite is true. Wait times have increased by 5.5 days this year. People continue to pay more health tax but get less in the way of quality care.

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): Last week, I had the pleasure of informing recipients of the community grants program that their application had been approved. PFLAG Canada, York region, based out of my riding of Thornhill, will receive \$45,000 to organize a billboard campaign and develop a support group to raise awareness of hate crimes. Family services, York region, will receive \$50,000 to increase community awareness of domestic violence issues in York region's South Asian community.

Our government is investing \$3.1 million to provide funding for 71 projects across Ontario. By investing in community projects to improve services for victims of crime, we are working toward stronger and safer communities.

These grants were awarded to the most promising local projects that assist victims of domestic violence,

sexual assault, hate crimes, child victims of sexual abuse and exploitation, as well as underserved and unserved victims. Funds are provided through the victims' justice fund. Money for the fund is collected through a provincial victim surcharge, which is applied to all fines under the Provincial Offences Act. Federal fine surcharge revenues are also collected for this fund. Money collected through the victim fine surcharge is dedicated to providing services for victims. It is these programs that will make our communities of Thornhill and Concord in Ontario more understanding and complete communities.

Thank you, Ontario.

HOSPICE CARE

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph–Wellington): I was pleased to attend the 25th anniversary celebration of Hospice Wellington on Friday.

Hospice Wellington has developed excellent community-based programs to provide patients and their families with support as they pass through diagnosis, end-of-life care and grieving. They were thrilled by Minister Smitherman's recent announcement that they will receive an additional \$49,600 each year, an increase of 16%, to support their community work.

But for 25 years, Hospice Wellington has had a dream of providing residential hospice care. This summer, they purchased a church to renovate for hospice beds. They were ecstatic when our government announced that in 2007, Hospice Wellington will be eligible for operating funding for their 10 new beds, right on schedule with the completion of renovations.

Our government is expanding end-of-life services that offer care, compassion and dignity to those who are in the last stages of their lives, while providing needed support to their families. This investment means there will be more choices available for people on how they can live out their remaining days.

I applaud the Premier and the Minister of Health for taking the initiative to expand Hospice Wellington, an important community-based health care service.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay–Superior North): For many years, I have been clamouring on behalf of my constituents for much-needed improvements to the highway infrastructure in my riding, so it is with some satisfaction that I note the major project this past summer that has rehabilitated Highway 11/17 between Spruce River Road and the McKenzie Inn. I'm also pleased that more improvements are on the way. In fact, today we are announcing recommended improvements between East Loon Lake Road and Pearl that will add to the safety of this stretch of the highway.

As much as this is appreciated, I would be letting my constituents down, however, if I did not renew my campaign for other pressing highway needs in my riding. Rehabilitation of the stretch between Thunder Bay and Nipigon is vital—there is no question about that—but

that does not lessen the need for a four-lane highway to bring northwestern Ontario into the 21st century. As I renew my efforts to have this project revived, I call on the minister to do the same.

On a smaller but no less important scale, a full rehabilitation of Highway 584 between Geraldton and Nakina is long overdue. This is a highway at the end of its life, and my constituents deserve a safe roadway to drive on once again.

Last but not least, I call on the ministry to approve more advance warning lights on the Thunder Bay Expressway. These lights are an inexpensive way to save lives, and I call on the minister once again to recognize their enormous value and approve their future installation sooner rather than later.

This is certainly not the first time that my constituents and my colleagues have heard me speak about—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Thank you. When I'm up, you're down.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I would like to bring members' attention to our guest in the members' east gallery, the Honourable Lyn McLeod, who was the MPP for Thunder Bay–Atikokan and Fort William in the 34th through 37th Parliaments.

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Also in the gallery is a great friend from Ottawa, Patrick Casey. Welcome him to the Legislature—his first visit to the Legislature.

Mr. Tony C. Wong (Markham): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I want to welcome a group of brilliant grade 5 students from E. T. Crowle Public School in my riding, led by their teacher Beverly Hilton and Aldo, a former classmate of Minister David Caplan. I want to welcome them in the west gallery.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PROVINCIAL PARKS AND CONSERVATION RESERVES ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LES PARCS PROVINCIAUX ET LES RÉSERVES DE CONSERVATION

Mr. Ramsay moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 11, An Act to enact the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, repeal the Provincial Parks Act and the Wilderness Areas Act and make complementary amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 11, Loi édictant la Loi sur les parcs provinciaux et les réserves de conservation, abrogeant la Loi sur les parcs provinciaux et la Loi sur la protection des régions sauvages et apportant des modifications complémentaires à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Minister, do you have a brief statement?

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): I will refer my remarks to ministerial statement time.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 73; the nays are 10.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

1400

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

PROTECTION OF RESOURCES

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): I'm very pleased to rise in the House today to introduce the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act.

Last September, we launched a major review of the province's parks legislation, the first in 50 years. The last time the Provincial Parks Act was reviewed, there were only eight provincial parks. Times have certainly changed, and so has our parks system. We now have 319 provincial parks, as well as 280 conservation reserves and 10 wilderness areas. Today we have a world-class system that provides places for people to enjoy the outdoors, and more than 10 million visits are made each year to Ontario parks.

As a society, we also appreciate how important protected areas are to the health, vitality and economic prosperity of Ontario. We have a better idea of what we should be protecting and how we should be going about it.

Given all that has changed, a thorough review was long overdue. As part of the review, we outlined eight legislative proposals and carried out far-reaching consultation on those proposals. We held nine open houses across the province. We collected more than 1,500 responses to an on-line survey. Also, 141 written submissions were received from aboriginal organizations, provincial stakeholders and other interested groups and individuals. Over 1,100 letters and faxes came in from a range of interests. I want to publicly thank all of those who shared their thoughts and advice with us. The members may be interested to know that 75% of the responses supported the proposals that we put forward. We also benefited from thoughtful recommendations from the Ontario Parks board of directors.

The new Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act I'm introducing today is a response to the need for updated legislation, and, if passed, would help guide the course of our protected areas through the 21st century. I'd like to share some of the highlights with the members.

For the first time, the new act would make ecological integrity a first priority when planning and managing within parks and conservation reserves. It is important to protect these special places and to keep them healthy for future generations. Strengthening ecological integrity is a key part of the initiative and is in keeping with the goals and objectives of Ontario's biodiversity strategy. It also complements our natural spaces program, the Greenbelt

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I have a motion for us today. That motion is that pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Tuesday, October 25, 2005, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Bradley has moved government notice of motion 9. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1351 to 1356.

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

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Baird, John R.	Hardeman, Ernie	Qaadri, Shafiq
Barrett, Toby	Hoy, Pat	Racco, Mario G.
Bartolucci, Rick	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramal, Khalil
Bentley, Christopher	Klees, Frank	Ramsay, David
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Kular, Kuldeep	Rinaldi, Lou
Bountrogiani, Marie	Kwinter, Monte	Runciman, Robert W.
Bradley, James J.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ruprecht, Tony
Brownell, Jim	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Bryant, Michael	Levac, Dave	Scott, Laurie
Cansfield, Donna H.	Marsales, Judy	Smith, Monique
Caplan, David	Martiniuk, Gerry	Smitherman, George
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Matthews, Deborah	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Colle, Mike	Mauro, Bill	Takhar, Harinder S.
Crozier, Bruce	McMeekin, Ted	Tascona, Joseph N.
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
Dhillon, Vic	Meilleur, Madeleine	Watson, Jim
Di Cocco, Caroline	Miller, Norm	Wilkinson, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Milloy, John	Wilson, Jim
Duguid, Brad	Mitchell, Carol	Witmer, Elizabeth
Duncan, Dwight	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wong, Tony C.
Dunlop, Garfield	Munro, Julia	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Parsons, Ernie	Zimmer, David
Fonseca, Peter	Peters, Steve	
Gerretsen, John	Peterson, Tim	

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

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Chudleigh, Ted	Marchese, Rosario	Yakabuski, John
Churley, Marilyn	Martel, Shelley	
Horwath, Andrea	Murdoch, Bill	

Act and the government's focus on a healthier environment for all Ontarians.

Under the legislation, we are proposing enhancements to accountability and transparency. From now on, the minister would be required to publicly report every five years on the health of our parks and protected areas. That way, people will know how we are doing on achieving our goals and objectives related to conditions in our parks and reserves, ecological representation and a range of other indicators.

The proposed legislation would legislate current planning and management policies and require management plans for all areas, with opportunities for public consultation before they are finalized.

For the first time, the proposed legislation would consolidate existing acts dealing with protected areas. Right now, parks come under the Provincial Parks Act, while conservation reserves are regulated under the Public Lands Act and wilderness areas are covered by the Wilderness Areas Act of 1959. That would all change under this new act. We would have one act for all of the components of the protected area system, and it would cover both parks and conservation reserves and recognize the key differences between them.

As recommended by the parks board, we will be reviewing the 10 wilderness areas, which cover about 900 hectares, to decide if they should become provincial parks, conservation reserves or be returned to crown land status. Once that initiative is complete, it is our intention to proclaim the repeal of the Wilderness Areas Act, and of course we will consult before making any final decisions in this regard. The old parks act did not provide a lot of guidance and planning for parks or how they should be managed, so our proposed legislation would remedy that by guiding how protected areas are both planned and managed. These requirements would be outlined in law, not just in policies or regulations.

We will also begin development of a non-legislative policy to ensure that activities on crown land adjacent to parks and conservation reserves do not affect their ecological integrity. The policy would continue to support and promote sustainable resource and community development and would be subject to consultation.

There is public support for this legislation. This act, if passed, would help strengthen the perimeter protection and ecological integrity of Ontario's provincial parks and conservation reserves. This is all part of our commitment to build a stronger, healthier and more vital Ontario.

CRIME PREVENTION

PRÉVENTION DE LA CRIMINALITÉ

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): I am proud to tell members of this House that today we are escalating and intensifying our efforts in our ongoing fight against gun violence in Ontario. Today we are dramatically increasing our arsenal of justice, with more

police and more prosecutors to fight gangs, to fight gang crime and to fight gun violence.

Cette augmentation du nombre de policiers et d'avocats de la Couronne responsables de la lutte contre les bandes criminalisées et les armes à feu est la plus importante qui soit dans l'histoire de notre province.

This represents the most dramatic increase in police and crown participation in the anti-guns and anti-gang task force that this province has ever seen. Today we announced the expansion of the Anti-Guns and Gangs Task Force. It is immediate and it is significant. It will mean an additional 26 experienced police officers added to the Anti-Guns and Gangs Task Force. It is immediate and will serve as a bridge as Toronto and the province bring on-line 1,000 new police officers under the leadership of Minister Kwinter and our Premier.

We will also be adding 32 additional seasoned prosecutors, who will be dedicated to working with the police on this specialized task force. These experienced crowns will prosecute existing guns and gangs cases. They will support police in the investigation of gun- and gang-related crime and the laying and prosecution of new gun and gang charges. The crown prosecutors have developed and continue to develop sentencing evidence in order to seek the most exemplary sentences within the law.

The federal government has also recently confirmed that they are in discussions with our office to expand the jurisdiction of the guns and gangs task force so that we can get that federal presence we need so that we can also include drug crimes in the jurisdiction, which is obviously a significant part of gang and gun violence.

Many of you will know that these police officers and crowns on the task force work together from day one of the investigation. The prosecutors provide early advice to the police, especially on search warrants, or on other issues arising out of an investigation. They will also, where appropriate, provide legal authorization for the police to conduct wiretaps. After charges are laid by the police, the prosecutors prepare and conduct the prosecutions. These cases can be complex and involve multiple defendants.

Joining police and crowns together to coordinate our efforts on behalf of our justice system is a concept that this government began in January 2004, a few months after taking office. It's thanks to innovative police officers and prosecutors that it happened. We know this pioneering approach works because it has achieved results. The work of the guns and gangs task force has already led to large-scale gang takedowns, which resulted in dozens of arrests, hundreds of charges, and the seizure of many firearms that were previously being used on our streets.

I want to take a moment to thank all of the prosecutors and police officers, those working on the Anti-Guns and Gangs Task Force and those working in every corner of this province, serving, protecting, preventing, and leading our community. They are the very vanguard of a civil

society, and we all in this House thank them all for the job they do.

Thanks also for the leadership of Chief Bill Blair and for the hard work and great work by our Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

1410

While I have a moment, I want to update the House on two other aspects of our comprehensive gun strategy.

Firstly, we're providing additional enhanced services to support gun crime victims and witnesses involved in these large and lengthy gun crime prosecutions. We are doing what is necessary to ensure victims have the information, assistance and support they need throughout the ordeal they are going through.

Secondly, I want to tell the members that our blitz of gun businesses is now complete. The chief firearms office has completed blitz inspections of all gun-licensed businesses in Toronto. It took place between September 19 and 23. This was done to ensure that gun storage and safekeeping standards were being met. The chief firearms officer has told me that he is now incorporating unannounced inspections of gun-licensed businesses around the province into his regular procedures; previously, those had been scheduled in advance.

We are engaging gun violence on the terrain of results. Success is measured in increments, but success is being attained. One illegal gun—just one—can exert a terrible toll in terms of human misery. Just one gun off our streets: one life saved, one family preserved; even one is worth all our efforts.

While continuing to build on enforcement initiatives, we will move forward in other ways. Premier McGuinty has already met representatives of the Coalition of African Canadian Organizations. The Premier and my cabinet colleague Minister Mary Anne Chambers have worked and will continue to work with them, in particular to find even more ways to assist at-risk youth.

I pledge to keep the House and the public updated in the days and weeks to come.

HYDRO GENERATION

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): I rise today to advise members of an important step our government has taken to recognize and encourage those electricity consumers who can generate their own power from renewable resources.

We've put in place a new regulation that ensures that all Ontarians will have access to net metering. Net metering allows a customer who generates their own power from a renewable source to connect their generation system to the electricity grid and receive a credit for the value of any excess electricity they export to it. Net metering is now available to any consumer who can generate a portion of their electricity needs through wind, water, solar or agricultural biomass. A homeowner with solar panels will benefit; a farmer who can use agricultural waste to generate electricity will benefit; and a small business with a small wind turbine on the property

will benefit. As they say, we will all benefit from the use of cleaner power.

This is another step forward, or perhaps more accurately, it is a way of encouraging many small steps forward by many Ontarians as we move ahead together in bringing a new culture of conservation to Ontario.

Net metering is an important part of our commitment to renewable energy. Our goal is to build an energy system that will serve our children and our grandchildren, an energy system that is safe, clean, reliable and affordable—energy that is sustainable into the future.

In the past, net metering was only available at the discretion of local energy distribution companies, and projects were usually limited to 50 kilowatts. Many Ontarians just did not have the opportunity to connect their own plans to generate electricity with the availability and security of power available through Ontario's electricity grid. And where net metering was possible, the permitted projects were limited in size, effectively shutting out some projects that could help make a difference. This new regulation ensures that all consumers have equal access to net metering. It requires distributors to permit net metering for eligible projects up to 500 kilowatts.

Being able to interconnect to the grid and to receive credit for excess power are real advantages for consumers, and it is high time they were available throughout this province. Consumers can save any excess production by exporting it right to the grid for credit and draw on this credit to offset charges when their system can't supply their needs. This means many more customers will be able to consider installing their own generation, secure in the knowledge that they can get full benefit from the power it provides.

While other jurisdictions in North America have allowed for net metering, I am proud this government is going further than others. For example, by allowing systems up to 500 kilowatts, our net metering program sets the stage for farmers to offset a substantial portion of their electricity purchases through the use of farm biomass. This renewable energy benefits both farmers and our province. Agricultural biomass is a renewable energy source. Maximizing renewable energy supports our strategy to replace coal-fired generation with cleaner sources of energy, and will help us to meet our target of providing 5% of electricity from renewable resources by 2007 and 10% by 2010.

Net metering is just one of a number of initiatives this government is taking to meet our renewable energy targets. We recognize that good ideas in electricity supply come in all shapes and all sizes. Our government is also moving ahead to develop a standard offer approach for smaller community and commercial projects to produce power and receive payment to cover their investments.

In fact, last August my predecessor, Minister Duncan, wrote to the Ontario Power Authority and the Ontario Energy Board, and asked that they present an approach for a standard offer for smaller generators with implementation guidelines by the end of this year. A standard

offer will create the opportunity for small community-based renewable energy projects—opportunities for businesses, rural land owners and farmers to set up renewable energy systems that can sell clean power back to the grid.

We have successfully undertaken three requests for proposals, which have attracted interest and investment from projects of all sizes, including wind, small hydro and landfill gas. New wind farms are going up near Sault Ste. Marie in the north, on the shores of Lake Huron and in central Ontario. Other wind projects are in various stages of development right around this province. Small-scale hydro projects in both eastern Ontario and the north are proceeding and our government is taking steps to encourage renewable energy projects on crown lands.

I can't stress how important conservation is in both reducing consumer energy costs and in ensuring that we have a sustainable energy system in Ontario. This government is committed to creating a culture of conservation in this province. We recognize the important role each of us has to play in Ontario, and what we can do to reduce our energy use and our energy footprint. By supporting net metering, we're taking one further step in building this culture of conservation in Ontario and ensuring a more sustainable future. My ministry will soon be distributing information to help consumers move toward net metering, and information will shortly be available on the Ministry of Energy Web site.

Net metering is an important part of our plan to transform Ontario's energy system. Our plan consists of building new generation capacity, maximizing our existing generation and transmission assets and creating a culture of conservation. Net metering provides an opportunity for individuals to contribute directly to building new generation capacity. Net metering puts generation near customers, taking full advantage of our existing distribution and transmission assets. Perhaps most importantly, net metering is a step in helping to build this conservation culture. It gives people a tool they can use to minimize their footprints, as I said, on our environment by creating some of their own energy through renewable resources like water, wind, solar and biomass.

I want to encourage members of this House and the people of Ontario to consider opportunities in their communities, in their own backyards, for renewable energy. It's good for customers, it's good for the province and it's good for our global environment. The net metering regulation I have announced today will make it easier for each and every one of us to play our part in creating this culture.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Response?

1420

PROTECTION OF RESOURCES

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): It's my pleasure to respond to the Minister of Natural Resources. I went down to his news conference in the media room and it reminded me of paddling around Lady Evelyn–Smoothwater park this summer, with a nice backdrop of a canoe. I spoke with Ontario Parks people, who re-

minded me that my father sat as a volunteer on the parks board for a number of years.

Parks are important to all Ontarians. May I remind this House, as the minister said, that there has been a huge increase in the number of parks. There were only eight provincial parks 50 years ago, and now we have 319 provincial parks, 280 conservation areas and 10 wilderness areas. Who was the world-famous environmentalist who brought about all of these new parks through the Ontario Living Legacy, might I ask? The answer to that question is Mike Harris. Mike Harris added eight million acres to Ontario's park system, an area the size of Lake Ontario. It's something he doesn't get much credit for, I might add.

I was pleased to see in the minister's announcement that he recognized that logging has been going on in Algonquin Park since before the park was created, and that activity will be allowed to continue in Algonquin Provincial Park. I would say that for the people in Parry Sound–Muskoka and Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, that is very important.

I hope when you consolidate the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, it means you simplify it. I'll look forward to reviewing the detail in the bill, because the devil is in the detail.

CRIME PREVENTION

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): In response to the Attorney General's statement, we're becoming accustomed to grandstanding, empty rhetoric and hollow promises from this Attorney General. We know the Attorney General spent the past summer working on his tan while Toronto was enduring unprecedented gun violence. We know that over two-plus years in office, this government has promised and re-promised 1,000 new police officers, yet today there is not one new officer on the beat in this province.

We know that over a year ago the Attorney General made a big show, which is his wont, announcing \$5 million from the victims' justice fund to fight child pornography. Would you be surprised to know that not one dollar has flowed to the Toronto Police Service from that promise made over one year ago? We know that you have a \$40-million surplus in the victims' justice fund, but you don't offer to cover the expenses of Karla Homolka's victims to attend her appeal hearing. We know that you want to cut over \$300 million out of the justice ministries' budget, starting with the transfer of parole board responsibilities to a federal system with a horrendous record of protecting public safety. We know, and people who pay attention know, that the McGuinty government is quite prepared to gut the justice ministries, empty the jails, promote pre-charge diversion and dismantle the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.

Your commitment to public safety is a phony front, driven by public opinion polls. Your secret plans to gut the justice ministries tell the real story. Instead of false crowing and backslapping, you should be apologizing to the people of Ontario for your real backroom plans to

dismantle programs, policies and long-standing initiatives that have had significant benefits for victims of crime and for enhanced public safety across our province.

HYDRO GENERATION

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): Today was net metering, volume four. This was the fourth time that this government has talked about net metering in this House since April 2004. They take an announcement and they reannounce it, and today they have reannounced it again.

What people in Ontario are worried about is whether or not they're going to have a reliable, affordable source of energy in 2007 when this government completes its ill-conceived agenda. Businesses are asking, "Can we continue to build, establish and remain here in Ontario under this government's energy policy?" Today we've heard nothing that would give them any comfort that there is going to be a positive move in that direction.

They keep talking about green power, but their goal is 5% by 2007. Five per cent is not going to deal with the gap that this government has created. The people of Ontario want to know, where is the power? We need to know that by 2007 the lights will remain on in this province, because your government's policy, as it is currently being disseminated, will ensure that the lights go out.

CRIME PREVENTION

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): We heard some tough words from the Attorney General today, but those words have not been backed up by tough action. What did we get today? Reassignment from existing forces in the GTA; no new officers and no new resources, except for what he calls bridge funding; just a shifting of the chairs on the deck once again. Those additional 26 senior police officers added to the guns and gangs task force are being taken from somewhere else, and for those 1,000 new cops on the street, cash-strapped municipalities have to pay two thirds of the costs, which they can't afford. The reality is that the number of police officers in Ontario declined last year and there is no real plan to get them on the street.

The McGuinty government has been missing in action on this file when it comes to community investment too. We need to see some real action on preventing gun violence and keeping kids in school and off the streets. The youth unemployment rate has ballooned, rising last year to a 10-year high of 17%, and for black kids, kids of colour, it is even higher.

Toronto's youth need jobs, recreational activity and education opportunities—no real announcement on that. Toronto's communities need enforcement and protection. The McGuinty government needs a comprehensive strategy to help our neighbourhoods and our youth through a combination of tougher law enforcement and increased investment in our social infrastructure. Sadly, we're getting too little of both too late. We want to see a real action plan that's going to make the difference.

HYDRO GENERATION

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): To respond to the Minister of Energy: yet again, another press release; yet again, no policy.

The government believes that if they say terms like "wind energy" or "wind turbines" five or six times, this will suddenly, magically create wind turbines. They believe that if they say "net metering" five or six times, suddenly we'll have effective net metering. What I was hoping to find today was a strategy by the government wherein farmers who want to generate their own electricity would have access to the capital funding to be able to set up an operation, where somebody who believes they can generate wind energy would have access to the capital financing to be able to do just that, and where people who live in an urban area who want to put solar panels on their roof and reduce their consumption of electricity in that way would have the capital funding to be able to do that.

Merely announcing once again that the government someday, perhaps, possibly, maybe, might like to see net metering isn't going to make it happen. What we need are, first of all, the low-interest loans so that farmers can do this and so that people who live in an urban area in an apartment building can afford to do this. Was this contained in today's announcement? No. Yet another empty announcement by the McGuinty government that doesn't have an electricity plan, and because it doesn't have an electricity plan, it resorts to making these repetitive announcements that don't amount to one kilowatt of electricity when all is said and done.

I want to point out to this government that just on wind energy, for example, you have held a dozen announcements, while Quebec is building 3,000 megawatts of wind capacity. You've held repeated announcements, while small provinces like Manitoba are going to surpass Ontario in terms of wind energy. You've held repeated announcements about a culture of conservation, when someone living in Quebec can access a low-interest loan to reinsulate their home, to install high-efficiency natural gas heat, to put in triple-pane windows. Someone in Manitoba can do the same. By doing that, they can reduce their use of electricity by 35%.

What do we have in Ontario under the McGuinty government? More announcements—announcement, announcement, announcement, empty press release, empty press release, empty press release. When are we going to see an energy efficiency strategy? Five days before the next election? Is that when you're going to try to impress people? No efficiency strategy—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

1430

VISITORS

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I know it's not a point of order, but I have in the audience today Wayne Roberts and Lori Stahlbrand, who are the parents of Anika Roberts, one of

our very own pages. She's there sitting right beside you, and we're very proud to have them in the Legislature.

ROSA PARKS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I believe we have unanimous consent for all parties to speak for up to five minutes to recognize the passing of civil rights leader Ms. Rosa Parks.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Bradley has asked for unanimous consent for all parties to speak for up to five minutes on the passing of civil rights leader Rosa Parks. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I rise to ask the House to join me in marking the passing of a significant figure in the civil rights movement and the advancement of women's rights in North America, Rosa Parks.

Rosa Parks was the black woman who refused to give up her seat on the bus to a white man in Montgomery, Alabama, one evening in December 1955. That act of defiance was the spark that ignited the civil rights movement. Rosa Parks showed that women can lead the way, even when faced with the most daunting obstacles. Indeed, simply by sitting down, Rosa Parks forced the nation to stand up and face the conflict between its principles and its actions.

"You died a little each time you found yourself face to face with this kind of discrimination," Rosa Parks later said of her refusal to give in.

Her arrest led to a 381-day boycott of the bus system organized by, at the time, an obscure Baptist minister named Martin Luther King Jr. For her part in the civil rights movement, Ms. Parks became known as the mother of the civil rights movement.

The days of Jim Crow and legally backed job discrimination now seem a long way off, but this is a journey that has been made in a single lifetime and a march that was launched by the determination of a single individual.

In 1957, Rosa Parks moved to Detroit, where she worked in the office of US Representative John Conyers for more than 20 years and remained active in the civil rights cause. Conyers recalls her humility, despite the enormous impact she had. She wasn't very interested in people trying to explain Rosa Parks, or teach about Rosa Parks. Instead, "She wanted them to understand the government and to understand their rights and the Constitution that people are still trying to perfect today."

Over the years, she deservedly received many awards: the US Presidential Medal of Freedom and the Congressional Gold Medal. Time magazine named her one of the country's 100 most influential people in the 20th century.

I understand that when Ms. Parks passed away yesterday at the age of 92, she was at home in her apartment overlooking the Detroit River and the Ontario border.

This is fitting, because her actions had a profound influence beyond her own country. Her struggle was of truly universal significance. Her life teaches us to fight discrimination in all its forms, with courage, vision and determination.

She said at a celebration in her honour some time ago, "I am leaving this legacy to all of you ... to bring peace, justice, equality, love and a fulfillment of what our lives should be. Without vision, the people will perish, and without courage and inspiration, dreams will die—the dream of freedom and peace."

I'm pleased to share this time with our own minister for children, the Honourable Mary Anne Chambers.

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): I rise to encourage you and my colleagues to recognize that what happened in 1955 actually happened in the lifetime of many of us here. In fact, I was five years old that year, but more importantly, my sister was eight and visiting Miami with my mother, who had frequently visited Miami on business.

What was different about that particular occasion was that when my mother visited a restaurant that she often visited when she was in Miami, on that particular occasion she had my sister with her, her black daughter. On that occasion my mother was introduced to discrimination. She was refused service because my sister was with her.

Rosa Parks's legacy must serve as a constant reminder to all of us of the evil of discrimination and segregation on the basis of race or any other irrelevant characteristic. It must convince us that every single day that we live, we must be thankful to brave people like Rosa Parks, but more importantly, we must take personal responsibility for ensuring that this kind of thing never happens again.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I'm pleased to speak on behalf of Rosa Parks. Yesterday, October 24, 2005, the world did indeed lose a very courageous and determined American woman who changed the course of history in the United States.

Rosa Parks, often referred to as the mother of the civil rights movement, was born Rosa Louise McCauley on February 14, 1913, in Alabama, to a carpenter and a school teacher who instilled in their daughter the value of self-worth, self-worth both as an African-American and as a woman. But it is unlikely that either Rosa Parks or her parents had ever imagined that one day she would be the public face of the civil rights movement in the United States.

I would just like to trace her story, because when I looked at the TV last night, you remember that she had a significant impact, but I think sometimes we forget what actually happened. On December 1, 1955, 42-year-old Rosa Parks was on her way home from her job as a seamstress for the Montgomery Fair department store. She boarded the Cleveland Avenue bus in Montgomery, Alabama, and she took a seat in the fifth row, otherwise known as the first row of the "coloured section."

Under Alabama law, when a bus was full, black passengers had to give up their seats to white passengers

and move further down to the back of the bus. However, on this particular day, Rosa Parks refused to stand and give up her seat to a white passenger. She was subsequently arrested and found guilty of disorderly conduct. Although not the first black person to refuse to give up her seat on a bus, Rosa Parks was a very well-respected member of the African-American community, having been involved with several organizations, and her refusal to give up her seat received a tremendous amount of attention from the African-American community.

The Montgomery bus incident led to the formation of the Montgomery Improvement Association, led by a young and relatively unknown pastor at the time by the name of Martin Luther King Jr. The association called for a boycott of the city-owned bus companies by all blacks, a boycott which lasted over a year and which brought Rosa Parks, Dr. King and their cause to the attention of the world.

On November 13, 1956, a Supreme Court decision struck down the Montgomery ordinance under which Mrs. Parks had been fined and declared that Alabama's state and local laws requiring segregation on buses were illegal. Federal injunctions were also served shortly after on the city and bus company officials, forcing them to follow the Supreme Court's ruling.

On December 21, 1956, Dr. King and Reverend Glen Smiley, a white minister, shared the front seat of a public bus. The civil rights movement, which was now put into full motion, would eventually lead to the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It was thanks to Rosa Parks and others who supported her that citizens in America today, regardless of race, must be given equal treatment under the law.

However, even after this, Rosa Parks continued to fight for freedom and equality, and to educate others about the civil rights movement. She sponsored a summer program for teenagers called Pathways to Freedom, in which young people tour America in buses, learning about the country's history and the civil rights movement.

Although Mrs. Parks passed away yesterday at the age of 92, her legacy to future generations will continue. She will remain a constant reminder of the fight for civil rights and equality for all human beings, regardless of race and gender. She will also serve as a constant reminder of the need to educate others to ensure that freedom and equality are never, ever compromised.

1440

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): There is an old saying that some people are born to greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them. Rosa Parks was not someone who sought greatness. Those who knew her knew her as a quiet person, even a shy person, but they also knew her as a determined person.

On December 1, 1955, in Montgomery, Alabama—an ordinary day, with unimportant things happening—a 42-year-old seamstress sitting on a bus sparked a revolution. With only a few words, Rosa Lee Parks changed the course of history. “Are you going to stand up?” the bus driver demanded. “No,” Rosa Parks answered. “Well, by God, I’m going to have you arrested,” the driver said.

“You may do that,” she replied. By her determination, she inspired the struggle for freedom around the world. By her determination, the civil rights movement was born into full force.

Rosa Parks was a quiet person, but she was determined and she was a fighter for equality, and she was a liberator. With her passing now ends the life of one of the great figures of the 20th century. Rosa Parks's legacy has many aspects, but her most enduring was her strength and her humanity. Throughout her life, she fought for equality and preached courage and charity. We owe a great deal to her.

I expect Rosa Parks would tell us that there are still civil rights challenges today that need to be addressed. We need to recognize that racism, discrimination and prejudice continue to exist in the world, in our world. First Nation communities struggle to be treated with equality and endure systematic discrimination. Racial profiling still happens in our midst. New Democrats believe no one should be subjected to racism, racial profiling or any kind of prejudice or discrimination in Ontario and in Canada. No progress today and no sustainable development tomorrow are conceivable without the elimination of discrimination for all as a fundamental human right. We are all members of one society, we are all citizens of the world and we all bear the responsibility.

Nous devons encourager une attitude accueillante et de soutien envers nos différences, reconnaissant nos luttes ainsi que les voyages incroyables que plusieurs de nos soeurs et de nos frères ont entrepris. Nous devons également supporter l'égalité, la justice, la liberté et les droits de la personne. Nous devons tous inspirer de la grandeur.

This will not be the end of Rosa Parks. She left us a legacy. She will be remembered as one who fought against racism, and she did it with dignity. That is the way people should conduct themselves. That is what Rosa Parks wanted.

At a celebration in her honour a couple of years ago, she said, “I am leaving this legacy to all of you ... to bring peace, justice, equality, love and a fulfillment of what our lives should be. Without vision, the people will perish, and without courage and inspiration, dreams will die—the dream of freedom and peace.”

Let us celebrate the life of a truly remarkable woman. Let us recognize that the work she started still leaves much to be done.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CRIME PREVENTION

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): My question is for the Premier. Premier, your Liberal government has announced that 1,000 new police officers will be hired—

Applause.

Mr. Runciman: It is certainly an announcement to be applauded, but the government has reannounced it seven times over the past 29 months, and not one officer is on the beat today. I don't hear any applause for that. Can the Premier explain why that is the case?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I'm pleased to be able to report that we have received a very positive response on the part of Ontario municipalities who are submitting applications for these 1,000 police officers, including, as I understand it, applications to fund 400 police officers who are presently on the job. I'm sure that my friend opposite will want to keep that in mind as we move forward.

May I say as well that I'm very pleased that to date, although we don't pretend to have all the answers when it comes to dealing with the issue of crime anywhere in the province of Ontario, I want to congratulate the Attorney General for the announcement he made earlier today and the way that he has been able to further strengthen our guns and gangs task force by adding 26 senior police officers and 32 additional crown prosecutors.

Mr. Runciman: They're telling us that of the 1,000, 400 are already on the job. So we're down to 600 new police officers, I guess.

Premier, your Attorney General announced 55 days ago that a gun amnesty program was being created by your government. Today, he said of that program, "Just trust us; it's coming soon." Your Attorney General also announced 55 days ago an improved witness protection program for people who come forward to shed light on a gun crime. Today, he said, "Just trust us; it's coming soon." It is the same story with the 1,000 new police officers—I guess it's now 600—that you have announced an incredible seven times, with predictable results: zero new police officers on the streets.

Premier, why should Ontarians "just trust" you when you so clearly demonstrated your commitment to fighting gun crime is no commitment at all?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Let me take this opportunity to tell you a bit more about the success being enjoyed by our guns and gangs task force, which was originally created by the Attorney General in January 2004.

The good work of the prosecutors and police involved on that task force has led to three separate major investigations and three major results: Project Impact led to 65 gang arrests and 275 charges; Project Pathfinder led to 16 gang arrests and over 100 charges; and more recently, in September of this year, Project Flicker led to 54 arrests and over 1,200 charges. What we're talking about here is the result of the funding already in place and the work already done: 135 gang arrests, 1,575 charges. I call that moving the yardstick forward. It's not everything, but we're moving in the right direction.

Mr. Runciman: Mr. Speaker, your Attorney General likes to claim credit for everything but the weather. The reality is that the Toronto police formed that task force in 2002.

I want to ask you about your government's sincerity in terms of its commitment to public safety. I'd call it a

phony front, a shell game, driven by political polls. You have to take a look at the considerable cuts that this government is considering: over \$300 million in cuts to the justice system; the parole board—we've already heard about that, transferring it to the federal system with a horrific record; closing jails; pre-charge diversion—can you believe it; dismantling the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board. That's the sort of public safety commitment they have.

1450

I ask the Premier today to clarify for all of us—he's telling us he's so concerned about public safety—is your government, are you personally, considering these draconian cuts to the justice ministries? Clarify that, yes or no.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: No, we're not, but let me just say something. If bombast were the prerequisite to eliminating crime in Ontario, then we would have no crime on the streets of Ontario after seven years of Tory government. But the fact of the matter is, that former government did more than its fair share of sowing the seeds for the issues we've got to grapple with today.

Just to remind my friends opposite, in addition to our commitment to put 1,000 more police officers on the streets of Ontario, in addition to the expansion of the work being done by our guns and gangs task force, we have put in place 34 new judges, 50 new crown attorneys, 55 probation officers, and we continue to press the federal government for mandatory minimum sentences for all gun crimes. The fact of the matter is that we're working as hard as we can to pick up where they dropped the ball.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): New question?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. It's interesting to note that at today's press conference you indicated that 26 police officers will be added to the guns and gangs task force. It is my understanding that the officers are not part of the 1,000 new police officers, but will be redirected from other police services such as York, Durham, the RCMP and possibly the OPP. Minister, you can give this House a breakdown on exactly where those 26 police officers will be coming from?

Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): The member will know that when we announced our 1,000 police officers program, we said that 500 of them would be used for community policing and 500 would be used for six defined areas that we're going to address, one of which is guns and gangs. What has happened is that the announcement was made by the Attorney General today that we are going to put 26 additional experienced officers into the guns and gangs task force, and we are going to provide \$500,000 in bridge financing. But when this program is fully implemented, they in fact will be in those 1,000 officers. That's how it works.

Mr. Dunlop: Thank you, Minister, but your Premier already mentioned that you've hired 400. That's what he

just said. Minister, will your ministry be compensating the already understaffed police services of York, Durham, Peel, Toronto, the RCMP and the OPP for the loss of manpower due to the officers being redirected to work on the guns and gangs task force? Who will be paying the salaries of these officers from the other police services who will be working on the guns and gangs task force? Just who is going to be paying the bill? That's what I'm asking you.

Hon. Mr. Kwinter: I'd like to use this opportunity to explain these 400 officers. We said that we would provide, during our mandate, 1,000 net new officers. That means we would use October 23, 2003, as the benchmark. Every police service replaces officers every year. They do it for attrition, resignations, transfers, deaths and retirements. So we've said to them, "As of October 23, 2003, any net new officers that you provide we will fund to a formula of 400 for that particular sector, 60 for officers in the north and the other 540 for new officers."

What is happening is that these officers who are going to be seconded, effectively, to this task force will come out of that pool, but we're starting that immediately because these are experienced officers we want to put to work today. That's what we're doing.

Mr. Dunlop: That's a good answer.

Interjections.

Mr. Dunlop: It's typical Liberal math at work.

In response to a media poll that shows residents of Toronto think that crime is the number one issue, the message from your government today is, "Just trust us. Our answer is coming soon." The problem is, all we see from you on the file is dithering and foot-dragging: no new police officers, despite seven announcements; no new police officers to fight gun crime, merely a shuffling of officers from one department to another; no action or pressing your federal cousins in Ottawa for tougher sentencing to keep violent criminals off the streets in the first place; and finally, your mandate to cut \$300 million from the justice ministries.

Minister, why have you failed to keep our communities as safe as they possibly can be?

Hon. Mr. Kwinter: The Premier has already indicated to you the success we've had with our guns and gangs strategy. You should also know that these police officers we're talking about—there seems to be a perception on that side of the House that I have a warehouse full of officers and I'm just waiting to send them to different places.

We are providing funding. We said we would provide that funding during the mandate of our government, and we've made that commitment. We've increased the number for your community policing program from a maximum of \$30,000 per officer to a maximum of \$35,000 an officer. We've taken 60 officers in the north and said we're going to provide them with \$70,000 an officer, and we're going to make it retroactive for those 400 officers who have been hired and are on the street.

This is a funding program that has the co-operation of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police. They helped us to design it. They are fully supportive—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): The question is for the Premier. The number of homicides in Toronto this year now stands at 64, most of them young adults. Young people who live in the neighbourhoods afflicted by this violence have told you and your government what must be done to end the violence. They point to closed community centres, abandoned after-school programs, and youth counsellors and community outreach workers fired from schools. And police, community agencies and organizations like the Canadian Tamil Youth Development Centre and Malvern Family Resource Centre agree with the youth. They don't want more half measures, they don't want more pilot projects; they want the social and community investments that are needed to deal with this violence. When is it going to happen, Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: It is happening. It's happening right now. For example, I've had the opportunity to meet with the East Scarborough Boys and Girls Club, I met with the Jamaican Canadian Association, I had a very good briefing from Operation Springboard and I met with the representation on the part of the African community coalition, together with Minister Chambers and a number of other ministers. I've had a very good discussion with all of these groups and representatives. We talked about some of the things we need to do together to ensure that we are tackling head-on not only crime itself but the causes of crime.

The member opposite will be very much aware of some of the programs we've funded. We look forward to continuing to work with these community groups so that we can improve the levels of support as we go forward.

Mr. Hampton: Many of these youth organizations and community groups have been meeting with your government for over two years. They're tired of being consulted. They want to see some action. They want to see something beyond pilot projects and piecemeal short-term funding.

For example, I met with Sharon Shelton, executive director of Tropicana, and her staff. They were very clear: Community agencies need long-term, sustainable funding, not more pilot projects. What they're getting from your government is a trickle here, a trickle there and more short-term, short funding. The Dixon Neighbourhood Youth Centre was recently forced to stop their drop-in program at the end of last summer. Why? Because you had provided only short-term funding.

Premier, when are the people who are losing their lives as a result of this violence going to see action from your government rather than pilot projects and press conferences?

1500

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I just want to draw to the attention of the member opposite that when I met with those groups, I did so out of the view of media, and it was not the subject of press conferences.

Just let me tell you about one particular initiative that we have moved ahead with, and that's this whole notion

of community use of schools. There is a letter that was sent to the Honourable Jim Watson, Minister of Health Promotion, from Ilene Watt, executive director of Basketball Ontario, and I want to quote from that letter, where she wrote:

“I cannot thank you and your staff enough for moving forward with the community use of schools program. It has made an incredible difference to the delivery of basketball programs by our member clubs across the province. The seven years of cutbacks in funding to the school system by the previous government actually eroded the number of children playing house league by an estimated 10,000 as gym fees continued to rise.... Our sport has a strong appeal to lower-income and new immigrant families whose national sport is basketball, and it is very important to keep this category of sport and physical activity open and accessible to all.”

We don't pretend to be purveyors of magic when it comes to dealing with crime issues, but I can tell you, we are very sincere in moving ahead with the kinds of initiatives that make up for lost ground under the previous government and that meet the needs of young people as they exist today.

Mr. Hampton: The Premier would have people believe that basketball is the solution. Let me tell you, the community organizations I've met with have been very clear as well. Basketball is one piece of a bigger puzzle.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Stop the clock. I need to be able to hear the leader of the third party.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, they're very clear that every time you stand up and talk about basketball, it is further evidence that you do not understand the issues here. There are all kinds of youth in this city who do not play basketball. They need after-school activities as well. There are all kinds of youth who want to have an opportunity at a job. There are all kinds of youth who need to know that there's going to be an outreach worker there, that there's going to be a social worker attached to the school so that the issues that they have to address—like poverty, like homelessness, like having parents who are working three jobs to pay the rent and put food on the table—can be understood and addressed.

Premier, you said, “Choose change,” to people. For all kinds of youth in this city who are seeing this violence, who are victims of this violence—

The Speaker: The question has been asked.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The member is essentially saying that he doesn't like the kind of change that we're bringing to Ontario, and I accept that from him, given his partisan standing and take on all of these things, but we think we're moving in the right direction when it comes to attacking both the cause of crime and crime itself.

The member opposite makes—and he knows—a very unfair accusation that somehow we're entirely committed to and focused on one particular issue, which happens to be recreating basketball programs in the province of Ontario. Obviously, we're doing much, much more than that.

In addition to community use of schools, which involves many more programs than just basketball, we're funding pre-apprenticeship projects and summer job programs. I'm looking, at some point in time, for support from the member opposite for our mandatory learning until the age of 18, which will go a long way to engaging and challenging young people who otherwise become prey to joining a gang. That may not be something that meets the standards of the member opposite, but I think it's something that Ontario—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): To the Premier: I would say, with 64 homicides, I'm not much impressed with your change.

Today, federal NDP leader Jack Layton and Paul Martin are meeting to address the spread of private health care in Canada. On the front edge of this private health care devolution is your scheme for 15 privately financed hospitals. In opposition, Premier, you said, “We believe in ... public financing” of hospitals because private financing is a “waste of money.” Premier, can you tell the people of Ontario when you changed your mind and decided that our health care dollars are better spent on profits for corporations than on health care services for people?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): We're going to hear the leader of the NDP bang this iron for years to come; there is little new or innovative in that particular approach. I know that Ontarians are in fact interested in knowing what this government is doing by way of a demonstrable commitment to ensuring that hospitals are built in the province of Ontario.

We're going to get the hospitals built sooner, we're going to get them built on time and on budget, and they're going to be publicly owned, publicly controlled and publicly accountable. Five key principles inform our work in this regard: The public interest shall be paramount; value for money must be demonstrated; public ownership and control will be maintained; accountability will be evident; and the whole process will be fair, transparent and efficient. We think it's important to build new hospitals in the province of Ontario. Perhaps the member opposite has a different view.

Mr. Hampton: The Premier now says that ordinary families should settle for privately financed hospitals that put profits before people. I want to be clear: New Democrats believe that if we have \$10 for health care, then \$10 should go toward health care, not eight for health care and two for corporate profits.

I want to refer to Derek Hansen, who is a town councillor near Sault Ste. Marie, where you have a scheme to build a privately financed hospital. He says, “We are prepared to give our fair share of funding [for the hospital], but not a penny if the private sector gets involved.”

Can the Premier explain why he's building privately financed hospitals that put profits first when ordinary families want public hospitals that put people first?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I might encourage my friend to visit Sault Ste. Marie, as I did when I was there to announce the construction of a new hospital in that community. I can tell you that it was overwhelmingly warmly received and welcomed. That community is delighted to learn that they are getting a new hospital. That hospital today is over 45 years old. That community needs a new hospital, and they are eager to begin construction. Again, that hospital will be publicly owned, it will be publicly controlled and it will be publicly accountable, and that's exactly what the people of the Soo are looking for.

Mr. Hampton: The people of Sault Ste. Marie deserve a new hospital, but they deserve a publicly financed and publicly owned hospital like you promised, Premier.

Analysis of your Brampton privately financed hospital shows that a \$500-million hospital becomes a \$675-million hospital because the private financiers want a profit of more than 20%. People aren't impressed with that, Premier. In fact, they see \$175 million of health care funding being wasted, money that could be used to train more doctors, hire more nurses or provide better care.

Premier, can you tell the people of Ontario how many more nurses we could train, how many more patients could receive good care with the \$175 million that's going into private profit pockets?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: There's nothing quite like creative math when you are bent on scaremongering in Ontario.

Here are the facts: We are committed to get the best possible value for taxpayers. We are going to compare the cost of hospitals—when we consider a new project, we compare the actual cost of construction, based on the traditional method, and that has not always been the best for us. In Thunder Bay, the projected cost was \$126 million, and it ended up being more than twice that—just so we understand how these things can sometimes come out. We compare the traditional method with this new proposal we have put before the people of Ontario, and what we're asking people to do is compare the two. In each and every instance we are guaranteeing good value for the people of Ontario, guaranteeing publicly owned, publicly controlled and publicly accountable hospitals. If the member opposite is against new hospitals in Ontario, then he should say so.

1510

PUBLIC HEALTH

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): I have a question for the Premier. Premier, on October 6 your Minister of Health confirmed that your government contributes the majority of public health funding to municipal health departments. Will you today guarantee that not one cent of provincial funding will fund safe injection sites for crack cocaine addicts in our city?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Yes, quite easily, for two reasons: First, there is no such proposal before any municipalities in Ontario, and more to the point, any such site would require federal approval. There is no ongoing discussion in any jurisdiction in Ontario that I am aware of with an issue of that nature.

Mr. Runciman: I guess the Premier's communications people have spoken to the minister after his scrum this morning. In his scrum, he was far less certain than he is here this afternoon. He said he has asked for more time to review the recommendations from the Toronto health department to see what they said about safe injection sites. That's what you said at the scrum this morning.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Were you there?

Mr. Runciman: Well, some people were there. Minister, and this really should be to the Premier, will you now guarantee, today, that you will take any and all steps necessary to ensure that provincial money, taxpayer money, is not used as an enabler for drug users and their addictions? Will you guarantee that safe injection sites do not crop up in our cities under any circumstances?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I've already indicated in my earlier question the circumstances that would have to be prevalent before any such consideration could be made, and other levels of government would have to deal with that before it was our responsibility. I've indicated that there are, accordingly, no public health dollars involved in this.

But where the honourable member is wrong, and he could get this right quite easily: When the question was posed this morning, I said that no report from the city of Toronto suggests or recommends safe injection sites, which is true. I said in the scrum that I thought it was important that I go back and check, because I had been briefed on the report, and I felt that the reporter asking the question may have been asking it in a somewhat erroneous fashion. I believe I have been validated on that point, and the honourable member would benefit from just a little bit more help.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): Premier, you are aware that the community in Kashechewan is in the midst of a water crisis. You know that children, the elderly and the frail are suffering from exposure to E. coli-infected water. Fully one half of the community's population is infected by skin diseases. I want to read from this morning's Toronto Star: "... infected with scabies, a nasty parasite, and impetigo, a bacterial skin infection characterized by blisters that may itch." You will also know that the very people who are sick are being treated with bad water and are getting sicker and sicker by the day.

You will be meeting this afternoon with the Chiefs of Ontario. They're going to ask you to help them by declar-

ing a state of emergency and evacuating children and the elderly, those who are sick, so that they can be treated and not be further exposed to bacteria-infected and E. coli-infected water.

Will you, Premier, today in this House say, "Yes, we will do what we have to do by declaring a state of emergency"?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the minister responsible for aboriginal affairs.

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): I appreciate the member being available after question period yesterday to have a meeting with community leaders. We met and sorted out these two issues. There's an issue you've just brought up in this question in regard to the medical treatment needed by the people there who have been affected by the high chlorine levels in the water. Also, there's the issue of the ongoing water treatment plant and its upkeep and maintenance. From that meeting, we decided that the doctor would make the determination, circling back to the community overnight, and that the nurses there would make a recommendation as to the number of patients who would need medical evacuation.

Once we get those figures, we'll make that consideration this afternoon.

Mr. Bisson: Premier, I am quite frankly shocked that you're not gripped by the urgency of the situation. We've got kids who are sick. Some of you have been to that community; at least you've seen it in the paper. They're getting sicker and sicker by the day.

You said today in response to a scrum question that you were embarrassed about what happened in Kashechewan. Your government knew for two years, as a result of an inspection done by the Ontario Clean Water Agency, that people were at risk and all you did was send a letter to the federal government to say there was a problem. Imagine how the people of Kashechewan feel. I think they feel more than embarrassed; they feel quite ill.

I am going to ask you again: The chiefs are going to ask you today to declare a state of emergency to evacuate those children and elderly who are sick and getting sicker. Will you (inaudible) and will you declare that state of emergency, or are we going to be embarrassed by tomorrow?

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: I would hope that right after question period we're going to have that information, and we're planning to have a meeting before we meet with the regional chiefs on that.

I would also like to give the member an update. I was speaking at noon hour with our Minister of the Environment, Laurel Broten, in regard to the water treatment system. Basically, she has put on standby the chief drinking water inspector of Ontario and asked him to put together an expert team from the Walkerton Clean Water Centre. That team now is on standby, and as soon as I get the OK from the chief, that team is going up into the community.

TEACHER TRAINING

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): My question is to the Minister of Education. Before becoming a member of provincial Parliament, I spent 32 years in the classroom as an educator. Standing in front of a classroom can be an intimidating experience for any teacher. How well I remember standing in front of my first class as a rookie in 1969.

My daughter Alison has recently followed my footsteps into the teaching profession, this being her first year as a teacher at Roxmore Public School in my great riding of Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh. You recently announced an induction program for all new teachers such as Alison that will provide mentoring and on-the-job training. When starting my teaching career, I didn't have the benefits of such a program, and I believe this program could be valuable for those students starting today. Minister, can you explain to Ontarians how this program will benefit and support first-year teachers?

Hon. Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): It is a program that I think is notable in the sense that it's the first time ever that a second professional step is being taken, not just in Ontario but anywhere in the country. What it does, really, is send a signal, certainly to teachers but also to students and parents, that we value the commitment that comes with a brand new teacher but we also understand it is a challenging profession and needs to be supported, especially in that critical first year.

These new teachers will receive a mentor, an experienced teacher. They will receive specific professional development to address the things you can only learn on the job, like classroom management, dealing with parents effectively, doing some of the things that may not have been covered fully in their preparation in the pre-service university program.

What it means, in short, is that we will provide the most support there has ever been to beginning teachers. In previous years and in previous administrations, we lost as many as one in three in their first five years. But in addition, we will have the best-prepared teachers anywhere in the country.

Mr. Brownell: Teaching is a great profession, and we in this House know that it takes a certain type of person to excel as an educator. We also know that one teacher can really make a world of difference in a child's life. I experience this regularly when former students contact me here at Queen's Park to show their current successes. I believe that too many gifted and talented teachers today are leaving this profession early and I commend you for initiating a program to assist teachers who are just beginning to realize their potential.

Under former governments, Ontario teachers wrote qualifying tests to become prepared for the teaching world. How does this program improve upon the former Ontario teacher qualification testing program?

Hon. Mr. Kennedy: We thought it was important to have quality assurance about teachers when they're actually teaching. What there was before was an expensive

\$9-million test applied by an American company, hired by the previous government, that gave the test before any classroom teaching started and right after the students had finished their exams and their coursework.

What will happen instead is that every new teacher will be evaluated by a principal two times during their year and they will receive supportive development in between. If they don't succeed in that, they will continue to get development. They will then reach the formal teacher appraisal program. I think what this does is create the right kind of relationship where principals are both evaluating but also supporting the development of new teachers. Unlike some previous administrations, we believe it is our job in this Legislature to support the quality of teaching, to make sure that it works, to make sure that every student in this province has their potential unlocked by a teacher who will help them to reach their potential as quickly as possible.

1520

TOBACCO INDUSTRY

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): Will the Premier inform the House what his government is prepared to do to help the 550 workers at Imperial Tobacco in Guelph who are losing their jobs next year because of his government's policy?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Hon. Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): Imperial Tobacco made a decision, obviously, responding to market conditions.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Nice suit.

Hon. Mr. Cordiano: You should try wearing one one day. This place might be more respectable.

The fact is that Imperial Tobacco is responding to market conditions they've cited. Their market has declined and they've cited those reasons. But I have to tell you that there's a lot of great news in the economy right now in terms of new job creation. Let me just repeat what has happened in Woodstock with Toyota locating there. That's going to have a tremendous impact on that community, which is affected by tobacco losses in terms of the market conditions. The new jobs that are coming to Woodstock and that entire region of southwestern Ontario, the spin-offs in terms of parts jobs, puts a tremendous boost to the economy and a great vote of confidence in the economy of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Supplementary question.

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): This has to go back to the Premier. Clearly the Guelph area is another casualty of McGuinty's war on tobacco. As with tobacco farming, your government is waving goodbye to jobs and to tax dollars. You jack up taxes, you jack up illegal consumption, and you force legal producers and legal manufacturers to leave the country. Community businesses go under. I've lost five new car

dealerships now in my riding. Premier, this is serious. Tobacco companies need a non-partisan working relationship with your government to salvage Canada's farming and industrial community. Given the recent bad news, and I regret they have made light of this bad news, will the Premier inform the House what he is going to do to provide a dignified exit from tobacco for farmers, and support their communities?

Interjections.

The Speaker: The Minister of Labour will need to come to order.

Hon. Mr. Cordiano: The Minister of Agriculture would like to respond to that.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I'm really happy to have the opportunity to talk in this House about what our government has done to support the tobacco industry, as they recognize the importance to transition to new crops, and also the importance of investing in those communities. We have established the tobacco transition fund. We have asked the Ontario Flue-Cured Tobacco Growers' Marketing Board to administer \$35 million for tobacco farmers in Ontario. Another \$15 million has been set aside and delivered to the Canada futures development program to support communities where the tobacco industry has been significant, to assist them in diversifying some of the initiatives in those areas where the impact of announcements such as—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

JUSTICES OF THE PEACE

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is for the Attorney General. New Democrats have repeatedly called on you to do something about Ontario's critical shortage of justices of the peace. Hamilton's provincial offences courts are in chaos over your failure to address the JP shortage across Ontario. Had you fixed the problem like you had promised, Hamilton would have two courts sitting three times a day, five days a week, handling provincial offences, but because of your inaction, only one courtroom is being used and it operates only one day a month. Attorney General, what is your plan to properly staff provincial offences courts in Hamilton and elsewhere so they can operate at full strength?

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): I welcome the question because the time for modernizing the justice of the peace bench is upon us now. This is a bench that has not had any significant changes to the way in which people are appointed, to the way in which the complement is in fact addressed, or issues dealing with transparency and independence. Nothing has changed for year after year after year under that government or that government. So what this government has been doing is appointing justices of the peace in a different way.

They are interviewed. A number of names are submitted to the Justices of the Peace Review Council and, just as with the Ontario Court of Justice, they recommend

a set of appointments from which they are appointed to the justice of the peace bench. It means that there is more independence. It means that there is more transparency and, most importantly, it means—and I'm sure the members of the third party would be supportive of this—that we are modernizing the justice of the peace bench so that we are giving our justice system and the people who appear before it—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary.

Ms. Horwath: Unfortunately, the efforts you're making are cold comfort to the people of Hamilton. In fact, ministry officials in my city say they are worried that important charges are being thrown out: everything from drunk driving and dangerous workplaces to derelict landlords. The landlord of 355 Melvin Avenue in Hamilton East is finally facing charges on major property violations, but your failure to provide enough justices of the peace means that this case won't even be heard until February 2007, at the earliest. Your non-response is that the Dalton McGuinty don't-pay-a-cent-event for law-breakers is good enough, and that's not good enough for me.

Can you please tell me again, why have you allowed Hamilton's court system to become so dysfunctional and what is your plan to fix this very serious problem?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: As I said, the opportunity to modernize the bench is upon us. A bill is going to be introduced on this matter very, very soon. I know that the third party is going to want to immediately do all they can to ensure that we can achieve the expedited debate, that we can achieve appropriate attention to this, so that we can get this bill, if it receives the support of the Legislature, passed as soon as possible, so that we can help that court in Hamilton, so that we can help that court in every corner of the province and so that we can have a justice of the peace system that we can all be proud of. Ladies and gentlemen, it's finally happening.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward–Hastings): My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I can't tell you how pleased and proud I was with yesterday's announcement of Ontario's first-ever wait times Web site. We all know that one of the challenges in our health care system has long been wait times for the kind of procedures people need to restore their eyesight, allow them to be mobile and independent, or that can literally change their lives.

It's clear that long wait times have been the shameful legacy left to Ontario by previous governments. Poor decisions and a lack of fortitude to tackle a challenging problem on behalf of Ontarians left a health care system that didn't work for patients. This was unfortunate, as people like my constituents paid the price as a result. Now we're making real progress.

I went on to www.health.gov.on.ca yesterday as soon as it was launched, and I felt empowered, not just for

myself but for my constituents. Can you tell me more about this Web site and how it fits in with our plans and benefits for patients?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I think the well-known adage that information is power has come to life in Ontario as relates to wait times. Yesterday, as a result of the actions of our government, but more particularly the actions of our government made possible by the extraordinary leadership of the health care system, Ontarians were given access to a tremendous amount of new information.

Yesterday, Ontarians were also forced to face down the cynicism of those opposite who said derisively, "Who would bother to log on to a Web site?" In the first 25 hours of the operation of this Web site, 22,480 Ontarians reached in and asked for information about what's going on. What I am especially proud to report is that at least two of those 22,000 people were seniors who found the capacity to navigate this tool that, according to my critic from the PC Party—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. 1530

Mr. Parsons: I'm sorry I went overtime, but if I speak any faster, they won't understand over there.

Minister, this is what my constituents and I have been waiting for for far too long. Our government has a plan, the fortitude to deliver results on behalf of patients in this province. I have always felt strongly that people are entitled to their health care information. As I said earlier, I went on to the Web site with excitement yesterday to learn more about the wait times in my own local health integration network. I saw that wait times for knee replacements in the southeast LHIN vary substantially, with Quinte Healthcare having the shortest wait times. This means that patients on a wait list in Kingston can consult with their doctor to explore the possibility of having the operation done at Quinte Healthcare. At the same time, I noted that Kingston has been a leader in terms of wait times for MRIs. This looks like the beginning of a system that will work for patients. Is this the kind of information we expect will help patients across the province?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I think the evidence is in that the only people who like this Web site are the people themselves. The honourable member understands by the nature of his question that as local health—

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Oh, give that guy a question, please—that as local health integration networks come to life, we have the capacity for the health care system in the same area to work together and to perform more as a system, not each hospital operating alone without any regard for what's going on in other hospitals, but rather, as an example, surgical programs coming together and seeking to find the ways they can better work together. This is the evidence that is developing all across the province of Ontario, and in the southeast LHIN as in each of the other 14, we have a new capacity for system performance and new, powerful tools for Ontarians.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): A question to the Minister of Finance: Yesterday I asked you a very basic question about your plans for the provincial education property tax rate and you seemed unaware that the Minister of Finance sets that. I think you've had a chance for your briefing, so I'll ask you again. Cities and counties across Ontario are seeing substantial increases in their MPAC assessments. Homeowners are also coping with your higher energy costs, your higher taxes, higher gas prices, and now, Dalton McGuinty health care user fees. Would you please tell us that you'll prevent this education property tax from being taken from these hard-working taxpayers? Will you commit today to lowering the provincial education property tax rate?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I would remind the member opposite that in fact this government in 2005 set the education tax as revenue-neutral. It responded to the assessment for the 2005 time period. As you know, the property tax assessments are going out. People are finding out. By example, the province-wide uniform residential tax rate for 2005 was set at 0.296%, which was reduced from the rate your government set of 0.335%, to accommodate the changes in property tax assessments.

Mr. Hudak: The minister continues to avoid my very simple question. Education property taxes are set to increase substantially, hundreds of millions of dollars across Ontario, unless you act. Communities like Hamilton are seeing a 16% increase in their assessments; Prince Edward county, 21%; Grey and Bruce county, in the 20s; eastern Ontario, in the 30s. Why don't you stand on your feet today and commit that those property tax bills are not going to go up by that rate, that you will, in your capacity as finance minister, commit today to lowering the provincial property tax rate for education?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: Perhaps the member didn't understand what I said. The policy of this government has been to set the education tax rate as revenue-neutral.

Now, let's talk about MPAC and the current system of reassessments that were developed under your government. I was very interested to read the comments of John Yakabuski who, asked if the former government under Premier Mike Harris bungled the property tax evaluation system, said, "Apparently so."

What else have we reviewed about the property tax assessment? I'd like to just spend a moment reminding the member, since he has given me the opportunity to re-explain our policy, what your policy was. You downloaded public health. You downloaded child care. You downloaded drinking water testing. You downloaded social housing. You downloaded roads and bridges. You downloaded public transit. If property taxes have gone up in this province, sir, I respectfully submit that it's your fault—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. New question.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Stop the clock. The member for Nickel Belt is waiting to ask her question.

Member for Nickel Belt.

LEGAL AID

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Thank you, Speaker.

I have a question for the Attorney General. Almost four years ago, Norrah Whitney filed a complaint of discrimination at the Ontario Human Rights Commission on behalf of her autistic son, Lucas. She received a legal aid certificate to pay for a lawyer to handle the case. Legal aid has now cancelled the certificate, just as the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario begins to hear the case. Both her former counsel and Ms. Whitney have asked legal aid for reconsideration. There has been no reply.

Minister, will you intervene at legal aid to ensure that Lucas will have the representation he needs before the tribunal?

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): I know the member held a press conference on the subject this morning. I was not able to see it. If the member has some particulars and specifics that she wishes to send over to me, I'll undertake to do whatever is appropriate for me to do.

Ms. Martel: I will send the specifics to you.

I want to make a couple of points. Despite writing to legal aid over a month ago, neither counsel for Ms. Whitney nor Ms. Whitney herself have received a reply—this at a time when a certificate has been in place for almost three years now. Norrah Whitney herself cannot afford to pay for a lawyer to represent Lucas. She is not a lawyer, so she does not want to take on that responsibility herself.

This very important case could have very significant implications for hundreds of autistic children in this province. So I say to the minister again, because he will have to do this, is he prepared to intervene at legal aid to ensure that Lucas will have a lawyer during these proceedings before the tribunal?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: This particular matter before the human rights tribunal does have commission counsel. Commission counsel is there and will be bringing forth issues, facts and representing the public interest.

In addition to that, there is another lawyer who does represent the vast majority of people before the commission, who is receiving funding from Legal Aid Ontario. I believe that—

Ms. Martel: No.

Hon. Mr. Bryant: Yes. I know that the individual the member has raised today is not using that counsel right now. That's why I've asked the member to provide me with the particulars. And if there is something appropriate that I can do, I will do it.

ONTARIO MUNICIPAL BOARD

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): My question today is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and it's on the issue of Ontario Municipal Board reform. Minister, you will know that yesterday the GTA mayors and many members of GTA councils visited Queen's Park and held a press conference. They were here to encourage planning and, more specifically, Ontario Municipal Board reforms. Since our election, our government has taken many steps to improve the planning system in Ontario. In fact, the mayor of my own community of Oakville, Mayor Ann Mulvale, said yesterday, "The Liberal government has introduced a number of significant reforms to the planning process during the past two years. My constituents are very interested in the planning process and in contributing to what the community will look like in years to come."

Minister, what steps has our government taken toward reforming planning systems and the Ontario Municipal Board?

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Let me first of all thank the member for his question, because I know that he has always had a huge interest in good planning, not only for Oakville but for Ontario. As a matter of fact, I note that as a former member of the GTA task force on OMB reform, he's got first-hand experience as to what the community wants with respect to planning and OMB reform.

1540

He will also know that our first act in the Legislature, as a matter of fact, was to pass the Strong Communities Planning Amendment Act, which basically gave more powers to municipalities. It opened up the planning process and it also allowed for more and longer public scrutiny by the general public and councils.

I know he's also interested in cutting the cost of OMB hearings. We are involved in consultations. We will be coming forward with some legislative changes within the very near future that I think both he and the individuals who spoke here yesterday can be proud of.

Mr. Flynn: That's a very good answer.

I chaired the planning reform consultation session hosted by the government in my community of Oakville last year—a very well-attended meeting. It was a great opportunity to listen to the views of my constituents in Oakville. Many individuals raised the point that the previous government did absolutely nothing about reforming the Ontario Municipal Board. I am thrilled that we have acted and are doing something about the OMB.

The current GTA task force on OMB reform includes Mississauga Mayor Hazel McCallion, Oakville Mayor Ann Mulvale and Ajax Mayor Steve Parish. They applaud the government's initiative in enacting changes to the planning process.

I'm aware that more reforms are required. Please explain to my constituents in Oakville what the next steps on OMB reform are and what steps will be involved in that process.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: I might just remind the member as well that the Premier made a commitment to the AMO conference delegates in August this year that there will be OMB reform and there will be a new era of municipal planning in Ontario. We all know that planning to deal with gridlock and sprawl has been lacking over the last eight years, especially in the GTA, so we're going to deal with that.

We want to give municipalities the best tools possible to deal with planning issues. We want to make sure that the provincial policy statement is adhered to, not only by municipalities but also by the Ontario Municipal Board, should that happen.

I would just ask the member to stay tuned, because OMB reform is on its way and it will be here shortly.

CRIME PREVENTION

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I want to get a clarification from the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services on the 26 police officers to the guns and gangs task force. I'm asking you once again, is there any way you could indicate to this House where those 26 police officers will come from? You didn't answer it the first time, and I'm asking you if you can indicate what municipal police service—or the OPP or the RCMP—they will come from. I'd appreciate an answer to that.

Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): This morning, during our press conference, Bill Blair, the Chief of Police of Toronto, was asked that question. He said that because this gangs and guns issue is not confined to the geographic definition of Toronto—they're not going to stop at Steeles Avenue and not go across the street—he is co-operating with the bordering police services of York, Durham and Peel, and saying, "We will all co-operate. You will provide officers to this task force." The exact number, from whatever service, is to be determined, but the Attorney General has announced that we will provide \$500,000 in bridge funding to finance that complement of 26. The exact makeup of it and where they are going to get those officers is really the decision of the task force itself.

Mr. Dunlop: Thanks very much, Minister. I understand now what you were trying to say, except that I was expecting the specifics, whether it was Halton or Peel or York or whatever it may be.

One other question: Is it true that, as you review the uploading of the Ontario Parole and Earned Release Board to the National Parole Board, you, along with the Attorney General, are looking for ways to reduce the spending of the two ministries—

The Speaker: Member, that supplementary is in no way related to the original question.

Mr. Dunlop: It's to do with financing, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: It is a considerable stretch, but I'm sure the minister may, under the circumstance, want to answer.

Hon. Mr. Kwinter: First of all, there were two real issues in that supplementary. One was about the parole and early release program, and the other one was the constraints that we're under in all levels of government. I can tell you this: We have a results-based plan that is going to get the finances of this province into a place where—you left it as a mess, and we're sorting that out. In order to get there, we've got to take a look at how we spend our money, to make sure that we are spending it efficiently and effectively. We are doing that and we're doing that in all of the ministries across the whole of government. We are making sure that we fulfill our campaign promise to provide proper funding for education, proper funding for health care and proper funding for economic development and also making sure that all of the other ministries deliver the services to the people of Ontario in a fiscally responsible way.

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. More than two years ago, Dalton McGuinty said that within one year of the election of a Liberal government, there would be a new Tenant Protection Act. One year has gone by, two years have gone by, we're into the fall session of the third year, and there's nothing on the agenda paper. When are you going to bring forward the new Tenant Protection Act that actually protects tenants?

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): As the member well knows, it's a very complicated issue. We've been doing an awful lot of consultation on it. We had a major consultation that took place last year.

Let's just talk about some of the programs that we have brought in with respect to tenants and with respect to renters in the province. We brought in the rent bank, which helps out tenants who are in an emergency situation with some help that they need so that they can stay in their places. We brought in the Toronto pilot project in which 400 units were made available for low-income families at a much reduced rent rate. We brought in rent guidelines at historically low levels; as a matter of fact, they were 1.5% for 2005 and 2.1% for 2006.

We are coordinating, together with the federal government, a national housing framework. There's much work to be done, but an awful lot has already been done by this government in order to help the renters and the low-income people in the province of Ontario.

PETITIONS

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario has an inconsistent policy for access to new cancer treatments while these drugs are under review for funding; and

“Whereas cancer patients taking oral chemotherapy may apply for a section 8 exception under the Ontario drug benefit plan with no such exception policy in place for intravenous cancer drugs administered in hospital; and

“Whereas this is an inequitable, inconsistent and unfair policy, creating two classes of cancer patients with further inequities on the basis of personal wealth and the willingness of hospitals to risk budgetary deficits to provide new intravenous chemotherapy treatments; and

“Whereas cancer patients have the right to the most effective care recommended by their doctors;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to provide immediate access to Velcade and other intravenous chemotherapy while these new cancer drugs are under review and provide a consistent policy for access to new cancer treatments that enables oncologists to apply for exceptions to meet the needs of” Ontario “patients.”

This petition has my signature of support as well.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I am pleased to lend assistance to my seatmate from Niagara Falls with this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the government of Ontario's health insurance plan covers treatments for one form of macular degeneration (wet) and there are other forms of macular degeneration (dry) that are not covered.

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

“There are thousands of Ontarians who suffer from macular degeneration resulting in loss of sight if treatment is not pursued. Treatment cost for this disease is astronomical for most constituents and adds a financial burden to their lives. Their only alternative is loss of sight. We believe the government of Ontario should cover treatment for all forms of macular degeneration through the Ontario health insurance program.”

This is a laudable objective. I will sign it and ask page Jasmine to carry it for me.

1550

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

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

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

“Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

“Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community.”

I affix my signature to this, as I agree with it, and I give it to my friend Charlie, who will bring it up there for you.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Lots of immigrants who come to this ... country with degrees in agriculture are forced to drive taxis in order to survive with their families. Some of the reasons” for this condition are: “immigrants have no contacts with rural Ontario, they socialize in communities which have no ties in rural Ontario, labour jobs in rural communities do not fit into the aspirations of agriculture-educated immigrants, government policies concentrate immigrants in urban areas, and finally, there is a huge gap in service for promoting, advocating and bridging the agricultural skills and degrees earned in home countries by immigrant populations.

“If the Legislative Assembly helps us to set a training farm centre under ‘Community Economic Development for Immigrant Women’ incorporation number 1618157, the organization will follow strategies such as hands-on training on Ontario soil, presentations, workshops, farm tours, liaison with local farmers’ associations and agricultural educational institutions, advocacy in the provincial Legislature and municipal councils, and exploration trips by immigrant families to rural Ontario.

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

“We want the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to recommend the Ministry of Agriculture to help in setting up a training farm centre in a rural area, which should be most suitable for this purpose.”

I am in agreement with this petition, and I send it to you via page Austin.

LESLIE M. FROST CENTRE

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): “Recommendations for the Frost Centre.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the McGuinty government announced the closure of the Leslie M. Frost Natural Resources Centre in July 2004 with no public consultation; and

“Whereas public outrage over the closure of the Frost Centre caused the government to appoint a working committee of local residents to examine options for the future of the property; and

“Whereas the working committee has completed their consultations and has prepared recommendations for the provincial government that include a procedure to follow during the request for proposals process; and

“Whereas the Frost Centre has been an important educational resource for the community, and continued use of the facility for educational purposes has widespread support;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

“The Dalton McGuinty Liberals should retain public ownership of the Frost Centre lands and follow the recommendations of the working committee regarding the request for proposals process.”

It’s signed by hundreds of people from my riding, and we’re looking forward to the request for proposals.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I’ve got a petition from the riding of Niagara Falls.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government of Ontario’s health insurance plan covers treatments for one form of macular degeneration (wet) there are other forms of macular degeneration (dry) that are not covered.

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

“There are thousands of Ontarians who suffer from macular degeneration resulting in loss of sight if treatment is not pursued. Treatment cost for this disease is astronomical for most constituents and adds a financial burden to their lives. Their only alternative is loss of sight. We believe the government of Ontario should cover treatment for all forms of macular degeneration through the Ontario health insurance program.”

HIGHWAY 35

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): Highway 35 four-laning:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas modern highways are economic lifelines to communities across Ontario and crucial to the growth of Ontario’s economy; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has been planning the expansion of Highway 35, and that expansion has been put on hold by the McGuinty government; and

“Whereas Highway 35 provides an important economic link in the overall transportation system—carrying

commuter, commercial and high tourist volumes to and from the Kawartha Lakes area and Haliburton; and

“Whereas the final round of public consultation has just been rescheduled;

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

“That the Liberal government move swiftly to complete the four-laning of Highway 35 after the completion of the public consultation process.”

I affix my name. It’s signed by several members of my riding.

SKILLS TRAINING

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition given to me by a community activist in my riding, Mr. Sonny Sansone, a busy and hard-working man. He continues to give me petitions, and I have one again today.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the McGuinty government has committed to a new multi-year increase of \$6.2 billion in colleges and universities;

“Whereas 178,000 new jobs have been created since the McGuinty government took office;

“Whereas the McGuinty government introduced the apprenticeship tax credit in order to encourage employers to participate in developing a highly skilled workforce; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government has invested \$12.5 million this year to assisting internationally trained individuals gain recognition in order to join the workforce;

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

“To support the McGuinty government’s commitment to ensure that Ontario has the best skilled workforce and the strongest economy.”

I agree with this petition, and I affix my signature to it today.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): “Support Volunteer Firefighters.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

It’s signed by hundreds of people from my riding, and I affix my signature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 30(b), it being 4 o’clock, I’m now required to call orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET MEASURES ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005

SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES

Mr. Duncan moved second 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 Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): It gives me great pleasure to rise today to speak about the Budget Measures Act, 2005, and I will be splitting my time with my parliamentary assistant, Wayne Arthurs.

Applause.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: He deserves a great round of applause; he’s a great member.

This is my first formal opportunity, apart from question period, of course, to address the House as finance minister. I’d like to thank you, Mr. Speaker, and through you all of my colleagues in this place, for allowing me the opportunity.

When we introduced our first budget in May 2004, we laid out for debate and consideration our government’s four-year plan for the province. It’s a prudent plan. It balances the budget and practises restraint. It’s a plan that delivers the results Ontarians want in health and education. It’s a plan that delivers transparency and accountability. It’s the right plan for Ontario.

1600

I’m proud to announce that we’ve made significant progress on our plan. Here are just a few examples. Class sizes in the early grades are smaller, there are more teachers, and test scores are higher. New family health teams are now starting up right across the province, and

our auto strategy has leveraged \$4 billion of new investment in this province and the jobs that go with that. I see the member for Oakville here, who worked so hard on that project for his community, for the Ford Motor Co. As that company restructures and deals with its challenges, we know in Ontario, because of his efforts and the efforts of my colleague the Minister of Economic Development, that this province will benefit from more investment, better jobs and higher-paying jobs.

All the while, while all these budget measures have gone on, we have seen 193,000 new jobs created in Ontario, all of this time cutting a deficit we inherited from the previous government by almost \$4 billion—a \$4-billion cut in that deficit. Clearly, our plan is sound and our plan is working.

In our second budget, we've outlined the next phase of the plan, to strengthen our province by investing in our people. In speaking to this bill today, I'd like to talk about some of our achievements to date and show how the budget bill builds on those achievements. After my remarks, as I said, my parliamentary assistant will provide some additional detail about the bill itself and some of the measures proposed in the bill to further the plan laid out in the budget.

When our government took office a little more than two years ago, we inherited a multi-billion-dollar deficit from the Harris-Eves government. Between 2001 and 2003-04, program spending increased by 21% while taxation revenue declined by almost 1%. By any stretch of the imagination, this was a practice that could not continue. The deficit for 2004-05 is \$1.6 billion, down significantly from our own budget prediction earlier this year and, as I said a moment ago, almost \$4 billion less than what we inherited from our predecessors. Much of the credit for this success is due to my predecessor, the Honourable Greg Sorbara. I, along with my colleagues in our caucus, commend him for the job he's done and for his commitment to the people of this great province.

The economy has also performed better than expected. Our revenues, particularly corporate tax revenues, are higher. Our interest costs, through better debt management and rates, are lower. We did not use our reserve, and we imposed discipline on the management of resources across the government. We will have a balanced budget at the latest in 2008-09. It may even 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 that is what we are doing with the Budget Measures Act, 2005.

We are introducing measures that, if passed, will amend the Community Small Business Investment Funds Act, the Financial Administration Act and the Ministry of Revenue Act. These amendments that are being proposed will continue our disciplined approach to governing and will allow for the continued growth and prosperity of our province.

To govern is to choose. We have chosen in this year's budget to invest in the priorities of the people of Ontario and to do so without introducing any new taxes or tax increases.

Our greatest Premiers have always made public education their highest priority. They've understood the link between a quality education and a long-term job which, in turn, supports a stronger economy. That link is stronger than it's ever been, because the brains and know-how of a skilled workforce are the economic edge of the 21st century. That's why we've announced Reaching Higher, the McGuinty government plan for post-secondary education. This \$6.2-billion, multi-year commitment is the single largest investment in higher education in 40 years.

The Reaching Higher plan has three goals: first, access to post-secondary education; second, quality post-secondary education; and third, accountability of the post-secondary system. In return for our investment, we will demand that institutions provide more access, more student assistance, higher quality, and more transparency and accountability.

In the spring budget bill we are debating here today, we are continuing our tradition of being open and transparent. This bill contains measures that will extend the spirit of our freedom of information legislation to include colleges and universities. We are introducing amendments that, if passed, will amend the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act to accommodate the inclusion of universities and colleges. This is a historic step and one this government is very proud of.

In health care, we're focusing on patients and sustaining medicare. Our plan includes a \$33-billion investment in health care this year. It means more doctors and nurses, shorter wait times, and a plan that keeps Ontarians healthier. Starting in 2005-06, we will, for the first time, begin to provide multi-year, hospital-by-hospital funding, which will allow better planning and smarter spending opportunities.

We are taking great strides toward improving Ontario's health care system. We have increased the number of training spots for international medical graduates and the number of residency positions in our medical schools. In September 2005, the first class undertook its studies at the new medical school in northern Ontario. We have provided funding for more than 3,000 new nursing positions in hospitals, long-term-care facilities, home care and community agencies.

Sixty-nine new family health teams are taking shape, teams that will provide family care for more than one million Ontarians. Over the next year, the province will announce 80 more such teams. We're providing thousands more cancer, cataract, and hip and knee replacement surgeries. In addition, we are promoting healthier lifestyles and increasing the province's share of public health unit funding from 50% to 75% by January 2007.

Economic growth is imperative to achieving Ontario's full potential. I want to turn my attention now to the economic part of our plan.

In addition to Reaching Higher, it also includes a five-year, \$30-billion infrastructure investment plan that will include highway repairs and expansion; improvements to schools, colleges and universities; expansion and im-

provements to hospitals; major investments in public transit; low-cost loans through the Ontario Strategic Infrastructure Financing Authority to help Ontario communities proceed with some 1,000 local roads, bridges, water projects and other priorities; and also looking at ways to encourage Ontario's pension plans to invest more in building Ontario's infrastructure rather than investing their money abroad.

Research is going to become an important force in our provincial economy. We have established the new Ministry of Research and Innovation, which is headed by the Premier. We are establishing a new chair in agricultural research at the University of Guelph. We are proposing a Research and Innovation Council of Ontario to coordinate research priorities and help make Ontario a North American leader in innovation.

Investing in our communities, urban and rural, makes sound economic sense. We are the first government in Ontario history to deliver gas tax dollars to municipalities for public transit. Recently this government signed a Canada-Ontario affordable housing agreement that will help to provide 15,000 new units of affordable housing. And finally, in 2005-06 we're investing \$485 million in northern infrastructure, including \$297 million to renew and expand northern highways.

1610

A key ingredient in the growth of our economy is continued investment in Ontario. What we have done with this bill before us is to ensure just that: that there will be continued investment in Ontario. In this bill, we are introducing amendments to the Corporations Tax Act that will amend the Ontario film and television tax credit. Investing in the entertainment and creative cluster enhances our economy. The film and television sector, for example, generates \$2 billion a year and employs more than 20,000 people. Our government supports cultural industries that bring together talent and technology to create jobs. If approved by the Legislature, this bill would allow us to invest \$48 million in two tax credits that would increase the Ontario film and television tax credit for domestic productions from 20% to 30% for five years and maintain the 10% regional bonus credit, and secondly, the Ontario production services tax credit for foreign productions from 11% to 18%, subject to review before the end of 2005. These changes would be retroactive to January 1, 2005.

We've also proposed in this bill amendments that would eliminate certain restrictions on the computer animation and special effects tax credit for eligible labour expenditures incurred after May 11 of this year.

The eminent British Prime Minister and statesman Sir Winston Churchill said, "There is no finer investment for any community than putting milk into babies." I think Sir Winston had it exactly right, in metaphorical as well as literal terms. He knew, and we knew, that in order to achieve success in a society, we must be collectively prepared to invest in its most basic elements. As the Premier often says, our people are our greatest asset.

Today, we are implementing our plan to invest in the future, in better education from the early years to the

most sophisticated graduate degree, in more timely and compassionate health care, and in a stronger, more productive economy.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for allowing me the opportunity to participate in this debate.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge):

Let me say how pleased I am today to be able to rise in the Legislature and follow the Minister of Finance in his first major address in his most recent portfolio. It's been my distinct pleasure these past few months to work directly with both Ministers of Finance, who have done such an outstanding job in their respective portfolios in both finance and energy during the first two years of our mandate. I can assure this House that the Ministry of Finance has been and continues to be in the hands of stellar ministers.

I'm pleased today to be able to speak to Bill 197, the Budget Measures Act, 2005. I have the privilege of providing you and the members of the Legislature with some additional details of this legislation, which seeks to enact elements of our second budget, these being matters I'll speak to in addition to those that the minister has referenced.

The budget bill covers a wide array of topics. For example, it contains amendments to some 11 statutes and proposes changes to three others, from the Assessment Act to the Retail Sales Tax Act. For our purposes today, I am going to group these proposals under three broad categories—those that support investment and innovation, those that advance our Reaching Higher agenda, and those that are about good government and responsible management—and limit my comments to a few budget measure initiatives only.

A few minutes ago, the minister mentioned our proposed amendments to the Ontario film and television tax credit and the Ontario production services tax credit. First announced last December, these changes would help enhance the province's support for a vital sector of our economy.

We all know that Ontario-produced films and television have captured the world's attention and have, in turn, brought the world to Ontario. For example, just last winter, scenes of the popular television drama *The West Wing*, which many of us, when we have an evening free from here, might turn on, were shot right here in southern Ontario. I can tell you that in my hometown and riding of Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge there's a tremendous amount of filming ongoing, and as early as this week there's consideration for a major shoot to occur in the municipality.

In addition to its cultural impact, the film and television sector is a major economic force. Our most recent figures show that it creates \$2 billion a year in economic activity and employs some 20,000 people. These people do a variety of work: There are actors, directors and production assistants, right down to those who support the craft services. Thousands of people contribute to this industry.

The introduction of this measure certainly has drawn positive responses from the industry. If I can quote,

“They’ve solved a beauty today. This is going to be the best year I’ve put in in a long, long time”—Gordon Pinsent, CFRB radio, in December 2004. Then a further quote: “I know several people who have lost their houses, people who are really desperate, so we needed this very badly.” Shirley Douglas on CFRB radio in December 2004.

To reiterate, we’ve proposed additional support for this industry that would increase the Ontario film and television tax credit for domestic productions from 20% to 30% for five years and maintain the 10% regional bonus credit, and increase the Ontario production services tax credit for foreign production from 11% to 18% for a one-year period to March 2006.

We’ve also proposed to eliminate the 48% restriction on qualifying costs for the Ontario computer animation and special effects tax credit, effective for the portion of the corporations Ontario labour expenditure incurred after May 11, 2005. This and other related changes would provide for consistency with the rules for the Ontario film and television tax credit. Again, our great province has developed a global reputation for leading-edge animation and special effects. Our graduates and professionals today have joined the ranks of the biggest names in the business. So, in addition to the creative element, we’re proposing these changes to make the sector even more attractive to investors, and the industry has recognized this. It’s important. I quote: “I want to personally thank you for stepping up to the plate on the film and television industry tax credits. You have been receptive and understanding, and your commitment to the industry is both recognized and enormously appreciated.... We in the film and television industry will be singing the praises of the McGuinty government for years to come. Once again, our sincere thanks.” That was from Mark Prior, president of ComWeb, in December 2004.

This is a quote from Sarah Ker-Hornell, managing director of FilmOntario, May 2005: “Increased tax credits and government investment in the film and TV industry are already paying dividends with a high volume of production in Ontario. That means more jobs for Ontario workers and more confidence for industry growth. This budget bill, with its commitment, shows the government is delivering. I urge all political parties to support these highly effective and much appreciated film industry measures.”

Another type of investor that I would like to spend a moment speaking about is one who has put money into labour-sponsored investment funds. In this bill, the proposed amendments would give legislative effect to our plan to phase out our tax credit for these funds by the end of the 2010 taxation year.

When these provincial tax credits were first introduced in 1991, the province’s venture capital sector was at a much different stage than it is today. Our government is putting in place a number of programs to help build and sustain the sector. These include:

- a new Ministry of Research and Innovation, led by the Premier;

- a new Ontario research and innovation council to provide expert advice and develop strategies to increase opportunities for innovation;

- a \$27-million Ontario research commercialization program to help public research institutions attract early-stage investment;

- a \$36-million Ontario commercialization investment fund program to help encourage investment in new technology companies;

- \$10 million to support the establishment of the McMaster innovation park in Hamilton; and

- \$6.5 million over three years for the new MaRS medical and related science discovery district to help market new Ontario technologies to the world.

Consultations with the industry are continuing in order to develop a transition plan that will allow the LSIF managers to adjust to the end of the tax credit.

1620

Let me turn my attention now—and yours, Mr. Speaker—to the elements of the bill that support our Reaching Higher plan. As members will recall, one year ago the McGuinty government took the bold step of introducing the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act. Although the provisions of this act apply to the government itself, we believe that its spirit can and should apply to other areas of the public sector. To that end, this bill proposes to make Ontario’s universities subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and ensure that Ontario’s publicly funded post-secondary institutions are even more transparent and accountable to the people of Ontario. That will be both our universities and our colleges of applied arts and science. So as not to jeopardize the work being done at these institutions, though, the freedom-of-information provision would take into account and respect academic freedom and competitiveness. The bill also proposes to establish a new arm’s-length Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario to take a lead role in supporting quality improvements in post-secondary education.

The 2005 budget recognizes that many Ontarians are choosing to pursue training opportunities at private career colleges. To ensure the quality of vocational programs offered at these colleges and protect student interest, the budget proposes to introduce the Private Career Colleges Act, 2005. This legislation would, among other measures, establish a superintendent. The superintendent will oversee such colleges, implement an insurance fund to protect students in the event of a college’s bankruptcy and ensure that only registered, approved colleges can operate in the province. I would like, just for a moment or so, to refer to some of the details with respect to the new superintendent from within the act itself. The act specifically states, under schedule L:

“Under the new act, the superintendent of private career colleges is authorized to issue policy directives that are binding on private career colleges setting out standards, performance indicators and performance ob-

jectives for vocational programs, as well as the credentials that may be granted for different classes of programs.

“In order to be registered to operate a private career college, or to renew a registration, the superintendent of private career colleges must be satisfied that the applicant will operate the college in accordance with the law, that the vocational programs provided at the college will meet the requirements of the act and the regulations and that the applicant is financially viable. In addition, the superintendent must be satisfied that the registration is in the public interest.”

Finally, I would like to address some of the good government measures in this bill. These measures emphasize our prudent management of the taxpayers’ investment in this government. One thing this bill will do is to authorize the borrowing of up to \$7.1 billion, if required. This money would be invested in the government’s programs, services and other related costs. No one should interpret this borrowing provision as anything more than the routine business of government.

Our fiscal plan is on track. We’ve achieved great success in reducing the deficit that was inherited. We will continue to manage our revenues and expenditures in a fiscally responsible manner.

This bill also proposes a streamlining of tax remission procedures. Current legislation allows the Minister of Finance to recommend to the Lieutenant Governor the remission of any tax, fee or penalty when considered to be in the public interest to do so. Under our proposed changes, the minister would have the authority to approve such a remission of \$10,000 or less in cases of public interest.

As the minister indicated earlier, and other members of our government, including Premier McGuinty, have said on so many occasions, our plan is working. Since we came into office just two years ago, we’ve seen thousands of new jobs created. We’ve seen major companies such as Toyota commit to additional investment in the province. And the deficit, which had stood at some \$5.5 billion in the 2003-04 fiscal year, is now at \$1.6 billion.

However, the future is not without risk. But I believe that our budget and this legislation do a commendable job of managing those risks and preparing Ontario for the success that awaits us all. I’m proud of the steps our government is taking, both in this bill and across the board, to help us achieve that success.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean–Carleton): I’m pleased to comment to the Minister of Finance and the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance. I would congratulate this minister on his new responsibilities if he were here. He has certainly worked hard in the energy sector.

I don’t actually disagree with everything in this bill. I think this is one of the challenges we face on a budget bill. The budget bill is, if you have confidence in the government’s management of the province’s finances. If I had to answer that question, it would be an unequivocal

no. There are parts of this budget, parts of the schedules contained in this legislation, that I don’t think are a bad thing, and when some of them go to committee, you may very well get members from the official opposition supporting some of the issues. Our finance critic, Tim Hudak, will be able to speak to that when he does his leadoff speech. Not everything in this legislation is bad. I do take issue with some of it, though.

This government, in my judgment, committed massive electoral fraud. They sought election on a platform they have not followed through on.

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: To accuse the government of massive electoral fraud I think is an infringement of the standing orders.

Mr. Baird: Which one?

Mr. Delaney: Standing order 13(i).

The Acting Speaker: The member for Nepean–Carleton knows it is the obligation of the Speaker to attempt to maintain decorum in the House. His comment has obviously offended a number of members of the House, and I would ask him to please withdraw the comment.

Mr. Baird: I withdraw, Speaker, but it clearly is not unparliamentary. I accept your order. As you say, it’s bringing disorder in the House, but this government sought election on promises it did not keep. They promised to hold a referendum before any tax increase and nothing in the financial circumstances of the province’s finances prevented them from following through on their election platform. There is one word the people of Ontario think of when it comes to the financial management of this government and its incompetence and misrepresentation—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much. Further questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I listened with some interest to the new Minister of Finance. He quoted Sir Winston Churchill, who, of all the people on this planet or certainly in this last, past century, was probably one of the most erudite, most quotable people. The quote was rather good, although I couldn’t write it down fast enough, that nothing is better for a government or a people to do than to give milk to babies. I think that’s a pretty good quote.

Having said that, I am perplexed, flabbergasted and completely at a loss to understand why he would quote such a statement when the government of which he is the finance minister does exactly the opposite. They take milk from babies, from the poorest children in this province, from the poorest children in this land. For those who have the temerity, the misfortunate, the bad luck of being the children of parents who are on Ontario Works or on ODSP, this government chooses to claw back the very money that is meant to provide milk to those children.

I am at a loss to understand why the finance minister would say that, and then give them only \$3 per month out of the \$32 per month that the federal government gives in the national child benefit program. If he truly believes

that the best thing this government can do and a people can do is to look after our children, and to make sure they do not go to bed hungry and to make sure they have nutritious food, then I would suggest he should do a whole lot better than misappropriately quote Sir Winston Churchill. He needs to act upon the very thing in which he is failing, the very fact of the budget which is not there. This government has done literally nothing for the poorest of poor children and, in that, you should be ashamed.

1630

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): It's a privilege to rise, as well, as a member of the government on this particular budget measure.

Of course there are many, many things that one could itemize, whether we're talking about infrastructure or taxation or new roads and highways and so on. The thing I wanted to address, with your indulgence, is the considerable strides that we as a government are making on the integration of new and newer Canadians into the workforce, in particular, for example—a file that I often interact with in my other capacity as a physician—regarding international medical graduates.

For the first time in living memory we have now a government in power, the McGuinty government, that actually takes the needs and the hurdles of international medical graduates seriously. This is part and parcel of the general plan to address the physician shortage, the shortage of family doctors that we inherited from the previous regime.

There are a number of items: for example, the strengthening of IMG-Ontario, essentially a clearing house and information portal, if you will, in which foreign medical graduates can actually have themselves assessed, have their credentials assessed, and then really in a single one-stop shopping figure out how they can best integrate themselves into the Ontario system; whether we are talking about bridge training financing; whether we are talking about increasing other options—into, say, radiology or as a lab technician or an ultrasonographer, for physicians from other countries who may wish to integrate into other health-care-related fields—or simply increasing the number of spots available.

All of these things are resulting in measurable improvements on the ground.

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): It's my pleasure to respond to the opening speech from the Minister of Finance on Bill 197, and also to the member from Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge.

The minister was talking about the new jobs they've created. Well, I just don't believe their numbers. From what I understand, we've lost 42,000 good manufacturing jobs in this province in the past year. When members like the member from Simcoe–Grey talk about the plants that are closing in the Collingwood area, those are the numbers I tend to believe.

We're seeing the fourth fiscal plan from this government in two years. So, frankly, I just don't believe their

numbers. The minister talked about, as they like to, this inherited deficit and how they have supposedly reduced the deficit by \$4 billion, I think he said. What about the \$4 billion that the Provincial Auditor forced you to change the accounting on because of the games you were playing? Those were the non-utility generators, the NUGs, the stranded debt from Ontario Hydro that you had in your first budget, but you were counting \$4 billion of revenue that you really weren't receiving. I just don't buy the numbers of this government.

I believe the Provincial Auditor; he made you change the rules and change the way you were accounting that \$4 billion. You like to spin these things for your political good, but I just don't buy it.

What we're really seeing is an increased debt to the people of this province. In the past year we had a good year because the people and businesses of this province over-performed and, as a result, the government had increased tax revenues. You talk about discipline. You're not showing any discipline at all. In fact, you've spent every dime of this increased revenue that the people of Ontario have generated through their hard work, and more, so that we are still running deficits. You talk about maybe having a balanced budget by 2008-09. With any amount of luck, there will be a different government in 2008-09.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time for questions and comments. The member for Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Arthurs: On behalf of the minister and myself, I want to thank the members for Nepean–Carleton, Beaches–East York, Etobicoke North and Parry Sound–Muskoka for their comments with respect to the second reading opening on the Budget Measures Act.

I found the opening comments by the member for Nepean–Carleton rather interesting. It's my recollection that his government and its last finance minister left the people of Ontario with a deficit in the mid \$5.5-billion range, with the continuous claim up to and including election day that it was a balanced budget. If there was any distortion of the truth in the context of what the public interest was, I would suggest it was left by the former government.

I appreciate the comments of other members. Across to the member from Beaches–East York, the challenges remain to be able to provide for those in the greatest need in the province of Ontario. The government will be addressing those matters on a go-forward basis, as we did in our first budget. We are focused on our core agenda and we're going to remain there. We are focused on the health and education requirements of this province, on the economy and on a clean and green environment.

The budget measures we have in place currently have taken that \$5.5-billion deficit and driven it down to \$1.6 billion, as reported for the end of March of the fiscal year we had currently just entered into at that point in time.

The way ahead at this point for our government is very positive. The opportunities for the people of Ontario are extremely positive. We will stay focused both on our

revenue and our expenditure sides to ensure we meet our goals and the goals of the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): Mr. Speaker, I would ask for unanimous consent to stand down our lead.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Leeds–Grenville has sought the unanimous consent of the House to stand down the lead speech from the official opposition. Is there such consent in the House? Agreed.

Mr. Runciman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate this opportunity. We've heard just in this brief time during the debate the reiteration of the "woe is me" story from the members of the Liberal government on the situation they found themselves in following the 2003 election. The reality is they found themselves in a situation that could have been addressed and should have been addressed in terms of achieving a balanced budget for that fiscal year. They don't talk about the fact that they were responsible for the government of Ontario for the last six months of that fiscal year.

We knew there were challenges. Anyone who went through SARS and the blackout and the challenges that we did in Ontario knew our fiscal projections were going to fall short. But we were prepared, if we had continued to be the government, to meet those challenges and keep our promise to have a balanced budget for that fiscal year, unlike the Liberal McGuinty government, which made a similar promise but then failed to keep it, blamed it on the former government and then spent like madmen for the six months they had control of the purse strings in that fiscal year.

Of course the other element of that is that when they came into office, they knew this was an opportunity to blame this on the big, bad former government, and to increase spending and increase taxes despite the very memorable commitments the Premier made in television advertising during the election campaign. The element they don't talk about was the tie-in to that promise, "If indeed we discover or find reasons that necessitate us increasing taxes, we will go to the people. We will have a referendum. We will make our case before the people of the province of Ontario, and only then will we increase taxes."

Of course we know that was another broken promise, one they fail to refer to when they stand up on their feet here and say, "Oh, well, we had to deal with the mess that was left on our doorstep." There were challenges left on your doorstep, but when you come into government you know there are going to be challenges. They were challenges that could have been met, could have been addressed. You could have had a balanced budget for the fiscal year 2003. You weren't prepared to do that. You looked for the easy way out. You looked for ways in which to deceive the public of Ontario with respect to the real plans you had in terms of increasing spending in a dramatic way. A broken promise is—

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): You said you had a balanced budget—\$6.2 billion.

1640

The Acting Speaker: I would ask the member opposite to the member who has the floor to please refrain from heckling. I recognize again the member for Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Runciman: We know the McGuinty government has become very well known for broken promises. We've seen that in public polling, where there is a word used to describe the Premier, which is not parliamentary, and I won't use it, but this is top of mind without prompting. A significant number of people describe the Premier with one four-letter word. In terms of the respect for all of us in this place, I think that's sad. I really believe it's sad that the Premier of the province of Ontario is considered by a majority of Ontarians with one four-letter word in terms of describing him and what they think of him. That's all surrounding the broken promises and the most significant one that I already talked about.

We have counted up 50 broken promises on that long laundry list of 230 promises they made, promises they made to the people of Ontario in order to get elected, in order to become the government. Now 50 of them have been broken.

Mr. Patten: Send the list over.

Mr. Runciman: The member would like to see a list of them. Well, I'd be glad to make sure that I bring a list into the House for him to consider. He may be surprised that his own party, his own government, has broken such a significant number of promises.

I want to just mention a couple of those. Nursing homes: We know the dire straits that many nursing homes in this province, public and private, are facing with respect to commitments made by the current government. In the election campaign, they were going to increase funding by \$6,000 per resident. They haven't come close to that, but they've imposed new requirements on these nursing homes, and it is extremely, extremely difficult.

I read into the record comments from Sherwood Park Manor, a non-profit in my riding that is having an extremely difficult time, cutting back on things that they should not have to cut back on because of requirements placed on them by the Liberal government and the shortfall in funding and their failure to meet that promise. They can't hire nurses. We know in terms of competition for nurses that it's very difficult, and they're facing the fact now that they cannot afford to pay the hourly rates that nurses are getting in the province of Ontario. So they can't compete.

There are significant problems in many of our nursing homes, and I would ask the government to reconsider that broken promise and meet the needs of these homes, fulfill a promise you made in 2003 to get the votes and support and to become the government of the province of Ontario.

I will just briefly mention agriculture. Again, there are significant and growing problems in the agricultural sector of this province. Rural communities, and not just the farming communities, but the people who supply the

farming communities—the grocery stores, the feed dealers, the farm implement dealers—are all taking on increasing debt loads as a result of low commodity prices, weather challenges and the lack of support from the Liberal government of Ontario.

When they ran for office, they said, “We’re going to make agriculture a lead ministry.” Of course, we now know that in the last budget, they cut the agriculture budget by well over \$100 million. We know it is not a lead ministry, and we know that these problems are going to continue.

In terms of a commitment in agriculture, Mr. Barrett—I’ll have to get his riding, Mr. Speaker—the member for Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant, has raised the plight of tobacco farmers in this province and the commitments they made to help tobacco farmers make the transition from tobacco to other products because of the legislation and the controls brought in by the Liberal government, and the impact that’s having on tobacco farmers. We know that those promises have not been fulfilled. We now see some of the peripheral damage—collateral damage, I guess—of this war on tobacco, with the announcement of close to 600 of the best jobs in the Guelph area now being lost to that community. I think it’s 88 jobs in Aylmer that are being lost because of Imperial Tobacco’s decision now to move those jobs to Quebec. That’s collateral damage and one that the Liberal government likes to ignore.

We heard the Minister of Economic Development today when he was asked a specific question about the challenges and the plight of the workers, and the challenges now facing the community of Guelph and surrounding area losing close to 600 jobs, with average salaries, I understand from press reports, in the neighbourhood of \$80,000 per annum. What is the impact going to be on that community and the families that are going to be impacted by this? I think it’s very significant. The minister did not have any response in any way, shape or form. He started to talk about Woodstock. That was an insult to the people of Guelph, the workers and employees and their families who had this bad news, this dramatic news dropped on them last week. There was no meaningful response; in fact, evasion. That’s a pretty sad commentary.

Of course, we’re seeing that sort of thing—significant loss of manufacturing jobs in this province—year over year. From September to September, we saw 42,000 manufacturing jobs lost in the province of Ontario. Last week, the member from Brant was talking about his own riding and how well they’re doing. Well, that’s good; we’re glad to hear that. There certainly are pockets in the province that are continuing to do well, but many, many other regions and areas of this province are suffering, are losing manufacturing jobs, are losing the good-paying jobs in their communities, which are being replaced in many respects by service jobs—the Wal-Mart jobs, Home Depot jobs—the kinds of jobs that do not meet the remuneration levels that many of our communities have looked to and expected. We may not see the impacts over the next 12, 16 or 18 months, but ultimately the loss of

those manufacturing jobs and the continuing erosion of the manufacturing base in Ontario is going to hurt, and it is going to hurt big time.

We see people leaving this province. We hear that a company from the Sarnia area is leaving because of Bill 133. It’s moving to the United States. We know of the uncertainty surrounding energy costs and the government’s intransigence with respect to coal-fired generation and looking at clean coal as an alternative, and looking at the report—I forget what the foundation was—of a few weeks ago saying that some of Ontario’s coal generation is the cleanest in North America. It’s in the top four or five in terms of clean generation in North America, yet this government has the ideological blinkers on and is moving ahead, and damn the torpedoes. What that means, really, is, “Damn the jobs, the living conditions and the standard of living in this province, because we don’t care if people are going to move out, and we don’t care if jobs are going to be lost.” That’s the indirect message they are sending by refusing to consider the impact of some of this hard-headed logic that they’re applying to this challenge.

We read where in the United States, like it or not—and in many respects, we don’t like it—Mr. Bush has removed all of the environmental requirements placed on coal generation at the moment because of what has happened with Hurricane Katrina. There were some heavy-duty restrictions through the EPA that were placed on them. He has now removed those, and there is some suggestion that they may be removed indefinitely. We know that Michigan, which is a significant competitor of ours, is moving in a big way to new coal generation. Yet again, we’re burying our heads in the sand and saying, “I guess those jobs don’t matter, because we’re going to shut down coal.” Obviously, they made a promise. This is one promise that I think we’re prepared to see them bring a more common sense approach to and work with us and with the people in the province who have made this a prosperous place for so many generations and a good place to live, work and raise a family.

1650

I want to spend a few minutes talking about another broken promise, and that’s on the law and order side, the policing side. We heard a bit of a revelation here today, in response to a question to the Premier about the 1,000 police officers that they promised, in their 230 promises, to put on the streets in Ontario. The Premier said, “We already have 400 of them out there.” Well, this is news to me and I think it’s news to virtually everyone in the policing community. They haven’t told anyone about this. But now, all of a sudden, as part of this program, they have 400 people who have already been hired by police services. That is not part of their promise. The minister gets up and talks about attrition, retirements, people moving on to new occupations or professions. That’s not part of the promise. There was no asterisk beside this promise. It was, “We will put 1,000 new officers on the streets in Ontario,” not, “We’ll only do this if the municipalities come up with 50 cents on the

dollar. We'll only do this in certain circumstances." There was a very clear, unequivocal commitment which is not being met.

We've heard this government, especially the Attorney General—who has never seen a TV camera he doesn't like. He has these press conferences at the drop of a hat, with nothing to say. I went to one a few weeks ago—and I'm sure the Toronto chief of police, Mr. Blair, was embarrassed by the emptiness of that press conference—where the minister talked about doing certain things, but he had no plans, no budget and no calendar in terms of how these things would occur. He was just getting back from his holiday—he had a great tan—saw the headlines and said, "Boy, we better do something about it." He jumped into the press gallery downstairs and gave this empty performance. As I said, I'm sure Chief Blair was embarrassed that he was dragged into that situation.

We had another press conference today, again falling short on facts and statistics with respect to what's going to happen. We know they have announced putting additional crowns into the area, and police officers. The curious one was the police officers. We don't know where these crowns are coming from and we don't know where these police are coming from. The minister was asked a specific question in the House today: "Where are these 26 police officers coming from? Do you have commitments from Peel, Durham, Halton, the OPP or the RCMP?" What he's talking about here apparently is a joint task force, without any commitments from any other service in Ontario.

Why would you go out and make an announcement that you're going to be dragging in or drawing in—whatever the term might be—police officers from other jurisdictions without having those commitments down solid? Why would you do that, other than the fact that you're reacting to the headline of the day and the poll that was in the media yesterday that crime and gun crime in Toronto are the number one concern of Torontonians? That's why you would do it, I guess, if you're that shallow, if you really do not have a plan or a commitment to ensure public safety. That's why you would do it.

I've said from day one that I think the Attorney General and his colleagues who get up and talk about this issue—it's phony. It's a shell game. They don't have a real commitment. We know they're looking at cuts in the justice ministries of over \$300 million. We've already heard about the possibility of transferring the Ontario board of parole to the federal board. What a horror story. Look at the people they've let out who have committed horrendous crimes, and now they have the gall, because they can possibly save a few million dollars, to transfer that critically important public safety responsibility to that parole board. That's the sort of thing they're looking at. They're looking at closing down the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board. We've got a backlog on that board of 10,000 crime victims who are not being addressed. That's the sort of thing the Attorney General doesn't like to talk about.

I mentioned today that they made a big announcement early last October that they were going to provide the Toronto Police Service with \$5 million for the porn unit. Well, as of today, not one dollar has been transferred to that unit in the Toronto Police Service—not one dollar—although, with great fanfare, the Attorney General said, "Oh, boy, are we doing something to fight porn crime in the city of Toronto."

I mentioned yesterday during question period—and didn't get an answer, of course, from the Attorney General; he got up and did his usual bafflegab act—the fact that we read in the paper that the families who are victims of Karla Homolka, the French family and the Mahaffy family, couldn't afford to go to Ms. Homolka's appeal hearing in Montreal. Their attorney, Mr. Danson, was going and he was paying his expenses to attend this hearing out of his own pocket.

The government has a surplus of \$40 million in the victims' justice fund, and we cannot advise the French family, the Mahaffy family and their counsel at the hearing, "If you wish to attend, we will make sure that your costs are covered." Who paid for the Attorney General's staff when this was a big public relations coup for them to travel to Quebec? The taxpayers paid for it, and here the French family, the Mahaffy family and Mr. Danson are having to dig into their own pockets. This is shameful, and the minister again refused to respond to that. He got up, but I don't know what he was talking about: "I have a great relationship with Mr. Danson and I have a great relationship with"—yes, you do. It's always "I, I, I, I" with the Attorney General: "I have this; I have that." We know what you have and it's one heck of a big ego.

We can talk about the victims' office, what has happened with the emaciation of the victims' office in the Attorney General's ministry; we can talk about some of the things they're looking at: pre-charge diversion. We know they closed the young offenders boot camp. We know now about young offenders who steal cars. What are they getting for it? A warning letter.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Prue: I listened to the honourable member and what he had to say. He has made one very good point that I think needs to be reiterated: If this government is intent upon saving money by closing down the probation and parole office and transferring that responsibility to the federal government, you are likely making a very great mistake.

Prior to being a full-time politician, prior to being the mayor of East York and prior to coming to this Legislature, I worked for some 20 years in the immigration department and dealt with probation and parole officials across this country. I dealt with federal officials and with Ontario officials. Let me tell you, the federal officials were overworked, they were underpaid, they had too much of a caseload and they did not have the same handle on dealing with people on probation and parole as their Ontario counterparts did.

I do acknowledge it was some 10 years ago that I left there and came into full-time political office, but I doubt

that anything much has changed. The federal government has not put the kind of money that is necessary in there to adequately deal with those people who are coming out of the criminal justice system, nor have they put in the funds that are necessary to protect the Canadian public. I would have to agree with the honourable member when he is concerned about that.

Also lost in this whole thing about public safety are other places you're looking to send provincial civil servants to the federal sphere. I'm thinking most concernedly about the transfer of the audit branch to the federal government. You are doing that to save a few dollars, I think, but that is quite misplaced as well. You are sending trained professionals, who make far more money in terms of tax money for Ontario than it actually costs, to a federal government that is overburdened, overworked and simply not able to deal adequately with the task before them and definitely cannot do as good a job for Ontario as our own workforce.

Mr. Delaney: Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the statements from the member for Leeds–Grenville. The member asserts that somehow the former government's \$5.5-billion budget deficit in fiscal year 2003-04 came about on the watch of this government. The facts point otherwise. The member's party, indeed their government, claimed that their budget for that year, 2003-04, was in balance. Less than a month after the election, the Ontario Auditor General estimated that year's budget deficit at \$5.6 billion.

On top of this, one should add the expenses cancelled by our government: its planned \$4.3-billion corporate tax cut and its estimated \$300-million private school tax credit. Adding \$4.6 billion to the final audited deficit figure of \$5.5 billion for the 2003-04 fiscal year shows that Ontarians dodged a \$10-billion budget deficit when they voted in a responsible, fiscally prudent Liberal government.

The member can stand in his place and expound this revisionist fiscal fiction before the people of Ontario, but the people of Ontario aren't buying it. What they are buying is a government that has brought down that Tory budget deficit from the \$5.5 billion our government inherited to a projected \$1.6 billion this year. Ontario's Liberal government has moved toward fiscal sanity with budget measures that have brought jobs, investment and revenue back to Ontario.

Ontario is now North America's leading auto manufacturing jurisdiction. No new investment came in on their watch, but it did on ours. That's what's making Ontario work again. That's why this government will be around for years to come.

1700

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): People will appreciate the fact that the member for Leeds–Grenville mentioned agriculture and the circumstances around our agricultural economy in Ontario. It's quite an appropriate topic to raise in debating a budget measures bill. The member made reference to low commodity prices. The weather: Many of the commod-

ities, fruits and vegetables in particular, were hit very hard with the cold winter we experienced. He would see these problems in his riding of Leeds–Grenville. He would see much of the hit throughout eastern Ontario, much of rural Ontario.

It's a whole other issue to start talking about the pulp and paper problems we're seeing, a primary industry in northern Ontario.

In our ridings, we see this hit with respect to people in rural Ontario spending less money on a restaurant meal, for example. The member made mention of the problems the farm implement dealers are experiencing—and car dealerships. I mentioned earlier today that in my riding alone we have now lost five car dealerships.

I'm very pleased the member for Leeds–Grenville made mention of a very recent disastrous announcement as a result of provincial government policy, as a result of high taxation, which has had an impact on the price of cigarettes. Imperial Tobacco is leaving Ontario as far as manufacturing is concerned.

Interjection.

Mr. Barrett: I heard a bit of a snicker across the way.

In the city of Guelph, as you well know, the plant for du Maurier and Players is losing 555 jobs. Aylmer is losing 80 jobs.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): In response to the comments made by the member for Leeds–Grenville, I want to pick up on the comments he made about the deficit.

I always have found it interesting how the Liberals, after they were elected, have pretended that they had no idea there was going to be a deficit and that they were, oh, so surprised after the election to find that there was going to be a deficit, and then started to use that as an excuse not to meet the promises they had made.

I remind folks who are watching that the Liberal finance critic, Mr. Phillips, was in the estimates committee for the Ministry of Finance in June 2003, before the election was called. He was in that committee, speaking very openly on the public record about the over \$5-billion risk he could see in the budget projections that had been put out by Madam Ecker. He was very clear on the public record that he recognized there was going to be a \$5-billion problem.

But it wasn't just Mr. Phillips. In August 2003, again before the election had been called, Mr. Kwinter, long-serving member of this assembly, told Canadian Press there was a potential \$5-billion deficit facing the province as a result of the Conservative budget. What's interesting, though, is that that didn't stop the Liberals from going out and making over 233 election promises—promises they knew they couldn't keep because of the deficit risk they themselves had identified. So it's always astonishing to me to hear the Liberals act so surprised about a deficit that their finance critic and another long-serving member of their party had talked openly about. They shouldn't have made the promises they did, because it was clear they had no intention of keeping them.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Leeds–Grenville has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Runciman: I appreciate the interventions, even the one I didn't agree with. The reality is that we only have a brief time to get our concerns on the record, and there were many others I wished to put forward.

Just quickly, there is a meeting in my riding—I believe it's this evening—dealing with the consideration at the federal level of placing a tariff on corn products coming in from the United States. Casco's a significant employer in my riding. In Cardinal, it's the last large manufacturing operation. I wrote to the Minister of Economic Development a few weeks ago, asking him to intervene. There are three Casco plants in Ontario that are in jeopardy if this tariff goes through. I have yet to receive a response. This is the sort of thing we would hope our minister and our government would be proactive on.

Hospital cuts: We know this in my area, and I know this is the case in terms of the Brockville General Hospital, closing beds, closing a ward, closing a lab, reducing operating time, all because of the demands and requirements of the Liberal government. That's the reality. We've lost our walk-in clinic in the city of Brockville. There's a dramatic shortage of doctors.

There are a couple of other things I wished to put on the record. The Minister of Health says he's not in support of this, but we talked about the lack of concern and understanding of rural Ontario. What we see is the Minister of Health, through his agents, attacking farm markets, potluck dinners, church and school bake sales. That's their understanding and appreciation of the history of rural Ontario. That's the sort of thing they're doing, and it's shameful.

On cormorants—the senator in New York state—we're having real problems with the fishery in the St. Lawrence, and the Ontario government will do nothing about cormorants.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Prue: Here I am, standing here six months after the budget was proclaimed in this House. It has taken six months for most of this debate to take place. World events have overtaken us. There have been a number of hurricanes, political parties have come and gone in the world, and elections have taken place. Six whole months have gone by, and I would think that anybody watching would think of this almost as *déjà vu*. Why are we sitting here discussing the events of six months ago, when so much has taken place? The minister has resigned and we have a new minister. I guess the public should be forgiven for wondering why this debate has taken so long, why the government hasn't ordered it until now, but be that as it may, here we go.

Going back to that fateful day and to what was happening in the province some six months ago, the government and the finance minister stood up and announced there was going to be an increase for hospital funding. To much fanfare, he announced there was going to be a 4.7% increase. That might sound good to some people, except that the hospitals had an itemized and budgeted account that they in fact needed 7%. Most of them said

they could not maintain the services if they were only to get that.

In the six months that have transpired, I think many of them have been proved right. Many are working right to the wire. Although some of them have been successful in keeping costs down, certainly we know that in many cases the backlogs have continued to rise and that doctors are unable to prescribe and do what they believe is necessary for their patients. The hospitals are under increasing stress. We have new programs now called LHINs, and I guess it's just not working according to plan.

1710

When the minister stood up six months ago, he talked about new financing and having money available for hospitals. Today, six months later, we know exactly what that means. It means, in the jargon of the Newspeak of this Parliament, that this is in fact P3 hospitals, those same much-maligned hospitals that members of the Liberal Party used to stand up and blast their Conservative opponents about in the last Parliament. Remember the Minister of Health, two-tier Tony, as he was then known? That's what you called him then, and I'm just wondering what you call yourselves, because in fact what you are delivering in this budget and what you have been doing for the last six months has done more to impact, more to put forward the idea of P3 hospitals and P3 health than anything that two-tier Tony ever did while he was Minister of Health.

You have actually mastered the complete dismantling, the complete beginning of the dismantling, of public health as we know it in Canada. You are more intent upon giving money to private developers and those who would invest in our hospitals and health care system than you are in providing the basic necessities for the people of Ontario.

In fact, in your budget you had a five-year plan of some \$30 billion to go to hospital redevelopment, which on the outside probably doesn't look too bad. The only problem that we as New Democrats have with that is that fully \$5.5 billion of that money—nearly one sixth, or 16.5%, 17%—is going to private financing, to make individuals rich, to make your friends a profit. We believed, and we continue to believe, and we hope we can convince you to go back to what you once said you believed, that every health care dollar that is raised by the public should go to health care. If you raise \$10 from an individual for health care, you should in turn spend \$10 on that health care—not \$8, not \$8.40, whatever the figure is you now have in mind so that someone can make a profit. This is not the way we see public health in Ontario. Your budget is unfolding in the last six months to prove exactly the point that was denied back then.

You talked back then, too, about how much you were spending in a whole bunch of areas and how really all of those ministries that were being flatlined, all of those ministries that weren't getting increases, were actually going to be better off. I take you back to those days. What were the ministries that were going to be better off

with less money, or the same amount of money and not even get the inflation rate? Those were the environment ministries. Can you think for a minute, has what you've done in environment in the last six months been a shining example to the people of this province? I would think not. There have been and continue to be problems in the environmental ministry which cannot be solved because you have not put sufficient monies into it.

Culture: I don't remember the last time when I heard anything about culture in this province, and certainly not in the last six months. I haven't heard of any great plans for museums or art galleries. I haven't heard of any great funding or new funding for international shows or Canadian art or Canadian culture. Certainly, it simply has gone off the map.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Lord of the Rings.

Mr. Prue: Lord of the Rings. There you go. We've got a show going to open in Toronto. That's what the Minister of Tourism thinks is cultural spending on a grand scale.

Natural resources: What has happened in terms of natural resources? I can't think of any great government initiative that has been announced in the last six months related to natural resources. In fact, how could there be when you have cut funds in this vital ministry?

Agriculture: We have questions asked in this Legislature daily and weekly about agriculture, the state of farms and farming in Ontario. Certainly I know that my own discussions with farmers—we're going to be seeing the chicken farmers tomorrow—is that all is not well on the farms and in the rural communities of Ontario. They feel neglected. They feel that the money that has been cut out of the programs that used to help them is no longer there.

Last but not least, you cut the monies available for northern development. The last couple of days have seen, I think, a lot of the problem. You've seen the Minister of Northern Development, the Minister of Natural Resources and the ministers responsible for northern Ontario talk about the difficulties of our native communities. You have seen how the lack of funding has made this government struggle through their own inertia, with nowhere to go, no programs, no plans, because you simply have not put the monies there.

I'd like to talk, though, about an issue very dear to my heart. One of my seven critic portfolios has to do with community and social services, and I would like to spend a little bit of time on that.

Prior to the last election, this government announced they were going to completely change the way we deal with the most unfortunate people in our society, those people who have to rely upon Ontario Works, general welfare provisions or Ontarians with disabilities provisions. You talked about how you were going to be fair. You talked about how they hadn't had a raise in some eight years. You talked about how you were going to end the clawback of the poorest of poor children.

I watched in anticipation with this budget. The budget before had given a paltry—and I say paltry—3% to the poorest of the poor on Ontario Works or on ODSP. They actually got their first increase in some eight or nine years. It wasn't very much, but as little as it was and as much as I would stand here and tell you it wasn't enough—and it wasn't—it was at least something.

In this budget, you didn't even have the good grace to give them one cent. You told them there was no money for them. Even though the Harris government had cut them back some 21% in 1995, even though inflation had stripped another 10% or 15% away from their monies, you gave them nothing. In fact, the poorest of the poor in Ontario, those who are disabled, those who are on general welfare—and remember, 46% of those on general welfare are children—get less money today in actual dollars than they got when Mike Harris left this building. I'm quite shocked. I thought the Liberal Party in the last election was trying to put forward a new platform. You said to choose change. Where is the change for the poorest of the poor? Where is the change for those kids? Where is the change for those who see no increase?

But I think the most horrible thing you've done is that you promised them you would end the clawback. You know what the clawback is. That's where the federal government attempts to end child poverty in Canada. It has a brilliant program that was developed some 10 years ago to eradicate child poverty by the year 2000 and funds it into the billions of dollars, making sure the poorest of poor children get money each and every month, similar to what the baby bonus used to be in the days of my youth and I think in the days of the youth of most of the members of this Legislature. They send out some \$32 a month in what can best be described as a baby bonus to the poorest of poor children, so they can have new shoes, so they can have adequate food, so they can have a few dollars to buy milk at school or they can go to a school program with their fellow pupils.

This government does exactly what the Harris government did before it. You might say you're sorry for doing it, but you still do it. You claw back almost all of the money intended for the poorest of the poor. You claw back the money they so desperately need, and there was nothing in this budget that's going to help them. In fact, it simply continued the clawback for another year.

I think back to what Dalton McGuinty and the Minister of Comsoc, Ms. Papatello, had to say about that, and what is being said today bears no resemblance to what was said when you were on this side of the House.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: The Tories did it for tax cuts.

Mr. Prue: It's being said in the House to me as I speak that this has to do with the Tory tax cuts. I know what Mike Harris did, and you know what he did and we all know what he did, but the problem is what you are doing about it. You have choices and you are not exercising the choices that I believe Liberals should be exercising.

1720

I want to tell you a very poignant story. I was at a function on Saturday night. It was a very wonderful

function. It was the Brooks foundation, on Saturday night. I went to this, and what it is, in a nutshell, is a foundation that has been set up to give scholarships, to give grants and monies to children who are from poor families, from visible minorities, so that they can go on in their education. If they are in public school, they can go on to high school; if they are in high school, they can go to college and/or university. It was a very uplifting, wonderful ceremony, to watch these young people getting monies made available to them. I was not there alone. There were two ministers there. The Minister of Children and Youth Services was there, and the minister of the treasury board was there as well. We were there and we watched this. We got up to make speeches. I did, and so did the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

I want to tell you what she had to say because the story she told was so poignant, was so wonderful. I just want to reiterate what she had to say because I think every Liberal needs to hear what she said about this—not what I say, what she said.

Her story went like this: She went to a school, not in her riding but in Malvern. It was a poor school. It was a school where most of the children are children of recent immigrants and most of the families are poor. Those children come to school and they're bright, they're energetic and they want to learn. She asked them, in a classroom, some 30 of them, what were their dreams, what were their ambitions, what did they want to be when they grew up. No hands went up. She finally bribed them by offering a ticket to the movies if any of them would stand up and say what they wanted to be, what ambition they had. Of course a few hands went up because a ticket to the movies for a poor kid is something really wonderful. She gave tickets for the first five kids. Their responses were, I think, quite typical. You would find these kinds of responses from any sort of middle-class neighbourhood, probably any neighbourhood at all in Ontario and in Canada.

Two of them wanted to be doctors, one of them wanted to be an astronaut, one wanted to be a sports hero and one wanted to be a musician; all, I think, pretty laudable goals. She talked with them and gave out the \$5 or so for each of the kids to go to a movie and was feeling pretty good about that. Then the principal came in and the principal shed some light on it. The principal told her that these were extremely bright kids in this school. These were kids who could make it, or might reasonably be expected to make it, and it was too bad none of them would. The principal told her that these kids could probably compete with any other school in the city or the province, including, and she used the example, Upper Canada College, but the reality was that most of these children, if not all of them, would never finish high school.

I think the minister was shocked, and she said she was shocked. He went on to say the reality was that two thirds of the children in that class came from families who live below the poverty line, and the other third was just scraping by. The minister felt kind of bad, because the

principal went on to say it was very good to give them money for the movies, but none of them would actually get to the movies. To actually get to the movie and plunk your money down to go in and see a show she had rewarded them with, they'd have to go by the TTC and they didn't have carfare, and if they went in there, the other kids would all be eating popcorn and they wouldn't have any. So she shelled out some more money. I think that was a really wonderful thing she did. She gave them \$5 for the movie, she gave them some carfare money, she gave them some money for popcorn, and that was for five kids.

She learned, I think, and she said, a very great lesson, because, and these are her words, "It wasn't enough to simply make the show available. You had to do more than that, to actually give the reward and give these kids an opportunity, because they were too poor to accept the award in and of itself." The reason I've told you this story—this was her story—is that you should all learn from this. If she were here, I think she would be shaking her head in agreement; this was precisely her story.

This is what you are doing as a Liberal Party, as a Liberal government. You are standing up and saying the wonderful job you are doing in terms of education. You're standing up saying that there are more teachers. You're standing up saying that the schools are there and that there is more money for the schools. You're standing up and saying, "That's what we're doing for poverty." I think the minister will tell you that isn't enough.

You can build the schools. Congratulations. You can put in a few more teachers. Congratulations. But in the end, you are not going to be successful with the poorest of the poor children unless they have decent clothes, unless they go to school and they're not hungry, unless they are given motivation and given an opportunity that they can feel equal with their peers. Until you do that, the principal's prognosis is the right one: They will not have a chance and virtually none of the kids in that class will finish high school.

The reason I'm telling you this story is that it's germane to what you're doing in the clawback. Think about what you're doing. You are taking the money from the poorest of the poor children. You are taking it off them, and then you are expecting them to go to your bright and shiny new school, which now has only 20 kids per classroom, and you are not—I think five or 10 years from now, you're going to be absolutely shocked that the dropout rate in those poor communities is going to be identical to what the dropout rate is today.

That is where you have failed. You have failed miserably in understanding poverty. You think that just by providing a schoolroom you are somehow going to alleviate that. It is simply not going to happen. By clawing back that money, you are taking away what they need most: good food, a pair of shoes, some decent clothes and self-respect. Without that, they're not going to be successful.

Why do you do it? When I listened to the previous minister, she said, "Because we fund other programs with it." Do those other programs benefit those poor children?

I think not. I think they benefit the middle class. I think the money goes to child care for middle-class parents. I think the money goes to all kinds of places where the poorest kids don't get an opportunity to use it, or at least not an opportunity to use the money as it was intended.

I'm asking you to think about that. I'm asking you to think in your next budget—because you've already failed in this one—how you can help these children. How can you make sure that they go on school trips? How can you make sure that they can compete? How do you make sure that they have a chance?

I told this story about the minister because of what you've said about students. Yes, you have said a couple of things about students, about the schools and the teachers. But the fees are still too high. Granted, you've frozen them. We want to see you freeze them for the balance of your term—I'm waiting for that to happen—but it wasn't in the budget. I hope it's in next year's budget. You have to make it possible for kids to go to school, to have a reasonable expectation that they can pass and that they can pay the monies back at the end. Without that, too many of the poorest of the poor will simply not attend.

On the whole issue of housing, the federal government has put in \$81 million this year for housing in Ontario, \$81 million which we, as a province, are supposed to match. We didn't do it. You didn't do it. The \$81 million that is there to increase housing for the poorest people in this province is not being spent. In fact, in this budget the minister put in only some \$30 million, which is about one third of what he was supposed to put in, and certainly will not match the federal dollars and certainly will not put up the number of housing units that we need in this province.

Other things: child care. The federal government promised much more money for child care. I know my colleague from Nickel Belt has spoken passionately and has all the facts and figures. They put in a lot of money, and Dalton McGuinty, prior to the election, promised \$300 million for child care. In the last budget and the last throne speech, the only money that is being spent by this government on child care is federal money which is being passed down, and even then, it's not being spent. It's being hoarded, it's being held aside and it's not really being released. There is no money in this budget for child care—absolutely nothing.

1730

This government promised to do some wonderful things for those children who suffer from autism. Now, if there is anything that I am ashamed of when I have to go out on the street and talk to people about what happens in this Legislature, the thing that I am most ashamed to tell them is what is happening to autistic children, or more correctly, what is not happening to autistic children.

I remember the days leading up to the last election. I remember sitting here in the Legislature, when the Conservatives sat on that side and Mr. Baird was the Minister of Community and Social Services. They made no bones about it; he made no bones about it. There

wasn't money for autistic children. John, turn around and tell me if I'm wrong. There was no money. It was too expensive. They weren't going to do it. They weren't. I felt really awful about that. They didn't think the money should be spent there. They didn't think the money should be spent. He's nodding his head. They didn't think the money should be spent on autistic children, because it was simply too expensive. They had other priorities. He was not going to make any promises that he felt he could not keep.

I'll tell you, I didn't like his answer. I admit, I didn't like his answer, sitting on this side, and I think lots of people in the province didn't like his answer. When they saw hope, when they saw Dalton McGuinty say he was going to do something for autistic children, when they saw the commitment and the promise that he would end the discrimination at age six, when they saw the promise that it would be adequately funded—I know that one of my neighbours with an autistic child thought this was something great.

I know that the Quance family, who have been in here many times, told me with no hesitation that they supported the Liberals because they thought this was going to make a great deal of difference for their child. You know, I have to tell you, all of them are supremely disappointed—no one, I think, more than I, because I thought that even though we were only seven members on this side—now eight—at least something was going to happen for the children who, in my mind, needed this more than anyone else in the province.

What do we have? What has this government done? First of all, you've funded hardly anything. Secondly, you've taken the families to court. You've sicced the entire judiciary upon them. You've sent lawyers to argue against them. You put roadblocks in their way when they're fighting. You have not delivered the services.

The Quance family asks simple questions. They have asked simple questions before this budget, during this budget and after this budget. Do you know what their question is? "When can my child be expected to get the service that she needs?"

The child is turning six soon. The child has never had any government services. The community has rallied. The Quances have mortgaged and remortgaged their house. The community has held fundraisers; I have gone to a couple myself. Friends, family and relatives are pouring in money as best they can so that child, their child, can have IBI services, that they can have someone to help her, they can have someone to train her.

The family has noticed remarkable changes, but they ask a simple question, which the minister, after more than a year, did not answer and has failed to answer—I'm hoping the new minister will. We've had meetings with bureaucrats; we've had meetings with the minister's staff. We've had meetings till they're over my head. When can she expect to get government-sponsored, government-approved and government-paid-for IBI? When? Just a date. You know, that has never, ever, ever been answered. All that has been answered is that, should she

not like it, “We’ll see you in court.” I looked to this budget to see something. It’s not there and it’s pretty sad.

I looked in some other areas where I am not a critic, looked at what the government is doing. One of them was agriculture. I spoke about this a little earlier—the cut-backs. I listened to the minister some six months ago talking about how they didn’t really cut agriculture back, because the year before they had spent a whole bunch of money on mad cow disease and some other things in the province, up over \$1 billion, and the reality was that even though it went down to only half as much, even though the budget was only going to be \$564 million this year, that really wasn’t a reduction. This was some kind of Newspeak. It’s taken a while for me to figure out that the reality is that even without mad cow disease, bovine spongiform—I forget what the rest of it is.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): Encephalopathy.

Mr. Prue: Thank you very much. The member from Perth–Middlesex is from farm country and knows that very well. It would have been \$733 million, so in reality the farm budget has been reduced. I know, in discussions with farmers, that they feel this government has not listened. The government will protest and of course say it has.

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: The government member will protest and invite me to the riding. I’ve been to your riding several times but not really to too many farms, I must admit. The agricultural community seems not to be very pleased. That’s all I’m passing on. I don’t think the budget is there that will actually reflect what the farmers of this province need. The farms are dwindling for several reasons. One is because we have become far more productive. It’s much easier for the machinery, it’s much easier for the factory farms, it’s much easier for the big conglomerates to do it than the family farm, and the number of family farms definitely has decreased. I think that may be the way, whether we like it or not, that is likely to happen in the future. There are fewer farmers, but those farmers who remain are making more demands and have a legitimate cause to do so.

I’d like to look at what’s happening to our native communities, to the aboriginal peoples, the First Nations of this province. Prior to the last election and even after the election, the Liberal platform was “to build a new partnership with Ontario’s aboriginal communities. Key services will reflect the needs of aboriginal communities.” That, in a nutshell, was what you had to say about that. I looked again in this budget. I don’t see very much for our aboriginal communities; I don’t see very much for our First Nations.

Some of the members of this Legislature, including me, had an opportunity to travel on an all-party committee through northern Ontario on a bill that was sponsored by my colleague the member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Baird: A good member.

Mr. Prue: A good member and a good bill because that was a revenue-sharing bill that would give oppor-

tunities for First Nations communities to get tax money, similar to what municipalities get when a new industry, a new corporation, a new commercial enterprise enters—if it were to come to Toronto, Toronto has the wherewithal to tax, as do the municipalities in Perth–Middlesex or London or any of the other places we represent. Unfortunately, the aboriginal First Nations communities in many respects do not have this right. They do not have the right to tax or to get the money from corporations. We all know what’s happening with De Beers. The diamond mine is going in and the negotiations are taking place around Attawapiskat. I think that’s what my colleague the member for Timmins–James Bay was trying to do in his bill. But that’s getting away from it just a little.

We had an opportunity to travel. We travelled to some pretty far and remote aboriginal communities, a couple of which had road access and several more which did not. I think some of the more isolated places really opened members’ eyes, those who went there for the first time. You could see in those communities the lack of hope; you could see in some of them the despair. With very little effort you could see poverty, you could see poor children, you could see schools that were ramshackle, you could see facilities which were certainly non-existent. But the biggest eye-opener to most of the members who had never travelled to the north before had to have been going to the Northern Store in these communities.

1740

There’s only one store. It’s called a Northern Store. It’s run independently. The stuff is flown in. Now, remember, in most of these communities, where unemployment can range as high as 90%, the chief amount of money comes from either Indian Affairs or from welfare provisions, where people have very little money and rely upon the land to provide much of their food. It was the Northern Store where some of the members went in and were shocked. They were absolutely shocked, because a bag of potatoes, which can be bought in Toronto for 97 cents in good times and \$1.97 or \$2.19 when it’s out of season, cost \$15 there. A bag of milk, which can be bought for \$4 or \$4.50 in Toronto, cost \$16 in the Northern Store. Some ice cream—the member from Willowdale went in and saw his favourite ice cream and was thinking about getting a little one-pound tub, which in his store he buys for \$2.69; it was \$12 there. He didn’t buy it. The list went on and on. Bread: \$4 a loaf. These are the kinds of aboriginal communities we have and this is the problem they have.

Then I looked with despair at this budget. Native affairs was cut by 22.2%, one budget over another: 22.2%. Is it any wonder that the news today, the news yesterday, the news all this week and probably for weeks to come, is about Kashechewan, an aboriginal community on the coast of Hudson Bay on the Albany River which has polluted water, where the children and old people are sick and at risk of dying, where no one is maintaining the infrastructure? The chiefs, as I speak, are

in this building with the Premier and the cabinet, trying to get Ontario to move and to do something. Is it any wonder they are angry with this government for a budget that has done absolutely nothing for them?

In the last two years that the minister has been aware of the problems in Kashechewan, the only action that was taken was to write a letter to his federal counterpart saying that something should be done. That isn't, in my mind, nearly enough. For a Liberal government, for a government that said they were going to build a new partnership with Ontario's aboriginal communities and that the key services will reflect the needs of aboriginal communities, that simply has not been done.

When my colleague from Timmins–James Bay stood up today and asked a question in the House: “Will you declare a state of emergency? Will you start moving these children out, these children who have lesions on their faces, who are sick and vomiting from E. coli in the water?” there was no answer. There was no answer at all. Nothing was said. “We’re going to consult with the chiefs. We’re going to consult with our federal counterparts.” If this isn’t an emergency, I don’t know what is.

A couple of weeks ago, I have to tell you, with the earthquake in Pakistan, I was actually proud of the Premier. I was proud when he stood up within an hour or two, two hours, and said, “We think this is a natural disaster and the Ontario government”—not the federal government, the Ontario government—“gives \$1 million to the people of Pakistan.” I thought that was a very generous offer for a province to make. The federal government made their own, and I’m thankful for that too. That was their real role. But \$1 million in two hours came from the Premier.

I wish the Premier would show the same compassion to our northern communities and our aboriginal peoples that he showed to the people of Pakistan. I think that they are every bit as deserving. I think the natural disaster that is taking place to them on the coast of Hudson Bay and James Bay—the drinking water polluted, sewage backing up, their schools in ruin; their community is simply not situated in the right place—is in fact of monumental proportions to them. It may not be the same number of people dying, because it’s sparsely populated. It’s not intensely populated like Kashmir, Pakistan and India but it is, all the same, serious to them.

I believe that the Premier and this government have an obligation within this budget—or make up more money, or take it from the contingency fund, which I understand has not been spent. Take it and make the same commitment to them. Bring those children out, bring out those old people who are at risk, and put money into that community.

If any members of this government want to see what should happen to our aboriginal people, you don’t have to go very far. If you’re up there on James Bay, go to the Ontario side of the bay and look at the communities. Then go to the Quebec side of James Bay and look at theirs, and you will see a contrast that would make us, as Ontarians, ashamed. You will see roads; you will see power; you will see sewage plants and water treatment

plants and enterprises; you will see people with money and hope. On our side you will see no roads, no power, no money, and despair. If Quebec can afford to do it, and tell the federal government they’re going to intercede and interfere in what the federal government does, then I think Ontario should be willing to do the same. The kind of commitment we have shown as a province, both with the tsunami disaster and the earthquake in Pakistan, is the kind of commitment we should show to our own people.

Much has been said since the budget about where the money is going to come from. There’s a lot of money floating out there, not just in this province, but money that has to be used from the deal that was signed between the Liberals and the NDP federally. If they can sign a deal and think of good things to do with the money in Ottawa, then I would hope you could sign a deal and think that some of the things I’m telling you are a good deal too. They decided that there was some money available in the budget and that there were some new priorities, and they sat down and said, “There’s going to be \$1.6 billion for housing, with a separate, earmarked portion for aboriginal housing throughout Canada.” That was a deal the New Democrats brought forward that we believed in, and we supported the Liberals when it came to the budget crunch. That kind of money needs to be spent. Ontario needs to tap into it and do something similar.

The federal New Democrats sat down with the Liberals in Ottawa and said, “We need to do more for post-secondary students,” and signed a deal that gives \$1.5 billion for post-secondary education and a portion of that money for employment insurance training. We think that’s a good deal. We think that’s where money should be spent in Ontario as well.

They sat down and signed a deal that will give some \$900 million, nearly \$1 billion, for environmental initiatives, largely based around retrofits to drop the dependency that many communities have on the overuse of energy. They also, in that deal, agreed to the one-cent gas tax transfer to the municipalities. All of those things were possible because there was a budget surplus.

I have stood in this House, and my colleagues have stood in this House, and we have supported, and members of the official opposition have supported, the Premier in terms of the \$23-billion deficit he talks about. We know that Ontario perhaps is getting a bad deal. But the commitment needs to be one and the same, that if some monies are forthcoming, they cannot be, as the Premier suggested last week—I’m still not very happy with the way he answered my question, because it was quoted in the Sudbury Star and in other newspapers across the province that if he got money from the federal government, he would give it back to corporations as a tax decrease.

I wonder where Liberals are, because sometimes I think this is déjà vu for me. Sometimes I think that I’m sitting in this same House four years ago. Sometimes I close my eyes, and from that side I think I still hear Mike Harris, because really this is not what you should be doing. This is not what you promised to do, but it’s

certainly what is contained in your budget. I'm telling you that as Liberals, you have to change.

1750

The member from Thornhill is waving me off, as if I don't know what I'm saying. I am eagerly anticipating his contribution to this debate, as I usually do, wondering what he might say.

But in any event, these are some of the problems. This is the budget where you promised to do things; this is the budget where you promised to start making a difference; this is the budget which was supposed to "choose change." Nothing much has changed, but for many, many people in this province—the poor, the aboriginals, the students, the immigrants—this budget has been a disaster.

There is one small item in the few minutes I have left. I realize that I still have 17 minutes—I may have to make up the rest on the next occasion—but in the few minutes I have left today, I would like to deal with a relatively small item—at least to me, until some people came to see me last week—and that is the entire item around the incorporation of health professionals. This was a very small item in the budget, in the budget papers and in Bill 197, the Budget Measures Act. It is the incorporation of health professionals. This had to do with the deal that was struck by the Minister of Health with the doctors in Ontario. It was part of a negotiated package. Of course, we, as members of this House, are not privy to what goes on in those rooms during the negotiations. They are merely reported to us after the event is over.

The first attempt with the doctors failed, as you all remember, and the Minister of Health went back to try it a second time. In his second attempt, he appears to have been successful, but one of the things that was given away and which is contained within this budget is the incorporation of health professionals. This, in a nutshell, allows doctors and dentists—I'm going to get to this in a minute, because I don't understand how the dentists snuck in here—to incorporate and to have their family members—their spouse or their adult children, once they are incorporated—being allowed to claim some of the profits and to pay tax on it because that allows them, as an incorporated entity, to reduce their overall taxes as physicians. In a nutshell, that's what it is.

The doctors wanted this as part of the deal, because I guess there wasn't enough money. So some of them figured, "If I can't earn more money, perhaps I can save the equivalent amount of money by getting around the provisions of the Income Tax Act and the Ontario act." This is, just for the record, specified in sections 3.1 and 3.2—I don't know—of the Business Corporations Act. This is what they were promised.

I have to question this government, but not in terms of the deal, because I think a contract is a contract, and if you sit down, you have to be good for your word, and I guess the minister is going to have to be good for his word. But I was approached by people who wonder, how did the dentists sneak in here? How were the dentists suddenly eligible for the same things that doctors are eligible for? They were of the opinion—and I agree—

why was this limited to doctors, and now dentists, who were not part of the negotiation, but the same thing was not given to chiropractors, chiropodists, therapists, veterinarians and others who are in the medical profession? They have not been granted the same rights. They came to see me and they asked me the question. I have to tell you that I was very perplexed by what was contained in this budget, or the rationale for it. I understand why the doctors were included, because they wanted it, and there would not be peace between the minister, the government and the doctors; they would not sign on to the accord unless they got some of what they were asking for. But I'm very curious, having given it to the doctors, why the government has limited in this budget the incorporation of health professionals to only dentists as another group.

Surely, if it is good for dentists, it is good for these other groups. Surely, if we can incorporate one set of professionals, we should allow other professionals the same access. If it's going to cost the government too much money, then I think you need to make that statement. You need to state why it's going to cost too much money, and you need to say why you are excluding these others groups, because the rationale, quite frankly, escapes me. There are very few of the chiropractors, therapists, veterinarians and chiropodists who would be able to take advantage of this system in comparison, I believe, to the number of doctors who could take advantage of such a tax system. The government has chosen to freeze them out. I have no doubt the same people who came to see me last week also came to see many of you. I think you need to answer that before this debate is over. I'm hoping someone from the government side will stand up and explain the rationale of this particular provision, which up until now I thought was a rather obscure provision of the budget, but now has new poignancy to me. It now has some real meaning.

Mr. Speaker, I can see that my time is fast evaporating. If this is an appropriate time to stop, I would be prepared to do so on your instruction. If you want me to speak for another minute or two, I can go on to another topic. I am entirely in your hands—but I don't think you're hearing it.

Mr. Speaker, I seek your instruction. I could continue for another minute or a few more minutes.

The Acting Speaker: I would appreciate it if you could continue for two more minutes.

Mr. Prue: This is a real stickler. I thought for sure he wanted to let all the people have an extra couple of minutes for supper, but it appears not. On the next occasion, Mr. Speaker, I was going to talk about a few other provisions, but I guess I'll get to them now.

The first item I wanted to talk about in a little bit of detail was the environmental policy of this government, and in this budget. As you will recognize, and as was stated some six months ago, the environment budget was one of those that was cut back. This causes me some chagrin in view of what happened in Walkerton and in view of what is happening today in Kashechewan and in view of the great many environmental impacts we are starting to see.

We had some women here just a week or two ago, the Ladies of the Lake from Lake Simcoe, who had outlined the industrial and farm runoff into the lake, and the problem it was causing with the water quality and the problem it was causing what is probably Ontario's largest recreation area. There does not seem to be any adequate spending on the environment, anything that has been put forward here in this budget that will reflect what is needed there.

These people are banding together, trying to do things that I believe governments are more capable of doing. They are collecting what must be fairly small sums of money to do citizen-sponsored upgrades in Lake Simcoe. To my mind, the budget should have been the place to have done this. The budget quite clearly is inadequate for the people of the Lake Simcoe area. The member from Simcoe North, I think, put it quite well in his statements before the House.

This is an area we should be trying to protect. It is the closest large recreation area to the city of Toronto and to

the entire Niagara horseshoe. Although we have the Great Lakes below us, it is one of the areas where many people have cottages and many people go for recreation, sports fishing, boating, canoeing and for the sheer enjoyment of what can be described as Canada's near north. It is a place where many of them aspire to retire to and to live. I don't think the measures that have been taken by the environment ministry for that small group of women have been adequate. As I said, they have had to take the matter into their own hands. They have come up with a calendar. It's really quite amusing and quite fun, and I laud them for their efforts. We, as a government, have to be doing more, much more.

I think my time is up, so I'm going to go back to the Ladies of the Lake on the next occasion.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much. It is 6 o'clock and this House stands adjourned until later on this evening at 6:45.

The House adjourned at 1800.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Mardi 25 octobre 2005

PREMIÈRE LECTURE

Loi de 2005 sur les parcs provinciaux et les réserves de conservation, projet de loi 11, <i>M. Ramsay</i>	
Adoptée.....	354

DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Prévention de la criminalité	
M. Bryant	355
M. Runciman.....	357
M ^{me} Churley	358

DEUXIÈME LECTURE

Loi de 2005 sur les mesures budgétaires, projet de loi 197, <i>M. Duncan</i>	
Débat présumé ajourné.....	389

AUTRES TRAVAUX

Rosa Parks	
M ^{me} Pupatello	359
M ^{me} Chambers	359
M ^{me} Witmer	359
M. Hampton	360

CONTENTS

Tuesday 25 October 2005

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Vernon White	
Mr. O'Toole.....	351
McMaster University	
Ms. Marsales.....	351
Water quality	
Mr. Miller.....	351
Arie Nerman	
Mr. Prue.....	352
Public libraries	
Mr. Brownell.....	352
Health care	
Mrs. Witmer.....	352
Victims of crime	
Mr. Racco.....	352
Hospice care	
Mrs. Sandals.....	353
Highway improvement	
Mr. Gravelle.....	353

FIRST READINGS

Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2005, Bill 11,	
<i>Mr. Ramsay</i>	
Agreed to.....	354

MOTIONS

House sittings	
Mr. Bradley.....	354
Agreed to.....	354

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

Protection of resources	
Mr. Ramsay.....	354
Mr. Miller.....	357
Crime prevention	
Mr. Bryant.....	355
Mr. Runciman.....	357
Ms. Churley.....	358
Hydro generation	
Mrs. Cansfield.....	356
Mr. Yakabuski.....	358
Mr. Hampton.....	358

ORAL QUESTIONS

Crime prevention	
Mr. Runciman.....	360
Mr. McGuinty.....	361, 362
Mr. Dunlop.....	361, 369
Mr. Kwinter.....	361, 369
Mr. Hampton.....	362

Hospital funding

Mr. Hampton.....	363
Mr. McGuinty.....	363

Public health

Mr. Runciman.....	364
Mr. Smitherman.....	364

Water quality

Mr. Bisson.....	364
Mr. Ramsay.....	365

Teacher training

Mr. Brownell.....	365
Mr. Kennedy.....	365

Tobacco industry

Mr. Arnott.....	366
Mr. Cordiano.....	366
Mr. Barrett.....	366
Mrs. Dombrowsky.....	366

Justices of the peace

Ms. Horwath.....	366
Mr. Bryant.....	366

Health care

Mr. Parsons.....	367
Mr. Smitherman.....	367

Property taxation

Mr. Hudak.....	368
Mr. Duncan.....	368

Legal aid

Ms. Martel.....	368
Mr. Bryant.....	368

Ontario Municipal Board

Mr. Flynn.....	369
Mr. Gerretsen.....	369

Tenant protection

Mr. Prue.....	370
Mr. Gerretsen.....	370

PETITIONS

Cancer treatment

Mr. Jackson.....	370
------------------	-----

Macular degeneration

Mr. Delaney.....	370
Mr. Flynn.....	371

Services for the developmentally disabled

Mr. Hardeman.....	370
-------------------	-----

Immigrants' skills

Mr. Qaadri.....	371
-----------------	-----

Leslie M. Frost centre

Ms. Scott.....	371
----------------	-----

Highway 35

Ms. Scott.....	371
----------------	-----

Skills training

Mr. Berardinetti.....	372
-----------------------	-----

Volunteer firefighters

Ms. Scott.....	372
----------------	-----

SECOND READINGS

Budget Measures Act, 2005, Bill 197,	
<i>Mr. Duncan</i>	
Mr. Duncan.....	372
Mr. Arthurs.....	374, 377
Mr. Baird.....	376
Mr. Prue.....	376, 380, 382
Mr. Qaadri.....	377
Mr. Miller.....	377
Mr. Runciman.....	378, 382
Mr. Delaney.....	381
Mr. Barrett.....	381
Ms. Martel.....	381
Debate deemed adjourned.....	389

OTHER BUSINESS

Visitors

The Speaker.....	353
Mr. Watson.....	353
Mr. Wong.....	353
Mr. Prue.....	358

Rosa Parks

Ms. Pupatello.....	359
Mrs. Chambers.....	359
Mrs. Witmer.....	359
Mr. Hampton.....	360

Continued overleaf