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(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 21 November 2005

Lundi 21 novembre 2005

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 21 November 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 21 novembre 2005

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SPECIAL CARE HOMES

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): Throughout Ontario, hundreds of vulnerable adults live in homes for special care. These homes provide a warm, secure, stable and friendly environment for fragile Ontarians, allowing them to lead fulfilling lives. The alternative for many of these individuals is a life of homelessness on the street.

The homes that these vulnerable Ontarians live in are mostly run by individual owner-operators who provide a home life, not an institutional life.

Special care homes have only had a single 3% increase since 1999. The funding they receive in no way matches the rising costs they face, particularly as the homes provide services well beyond just shelter and food. The owner-operators of special care homes want to be able to provide the care and services that vulnerable adults need. They cannot do this without a reasonable increase in funding from the government.

The Liberal government promised in the Ontario election that it would "significantly increase supportive housing options for those suffering from mental illness." I call on the government to bring in an immediate increase in funding to homes for special care. They provide much more than good value for money: They give vulnerable adults a home where they can live a safe, secure and meaningful life.

YOUNG PEOPLE

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): Even as a person who considers himself to be the world's oldest teenager, I find it a challenge at times to know exactly what our young people are up to these days, so I made a list of observations over the past week.

I had the privilege of presenting Ontario volunteer awards several weeks ago to an overwhelming number of young people who had contributed to their community:

—On Halloween just past, significant numbers of young people served to monitor the streets and guard and make sure that everything was being done safely.

—Our food banks in this community depend on young people and their contributions.

—In community kitchens in my community we have young volunteers, especially for this coming Christmas Day.

—Many, many of our seniors benefit from young people coming in and spending some time with them, and in fact having a grandparent-grandchild role.

—The Water for Katrina project that we undertook: Young people brought in their paper route money or their part-time employment money to make sure that people in the southern US had water to drink.

—Volunteers in our hospitals: We could not do without them.

—Our air, sea and army cadets: tremendous young people contributing to their community and to their country.

—Book buddies in schools: high school students who help elementary students to read.

—Library volunteers, over and over: I'm thinking of the Stirling library and the number of volunteers there.

—We have native dancers on our reserve who preserve their culture.

—The student trustees who sit on each school board: By their time, given freely, they contribute so much to the school system.

—Our young people organize, coach and referee sports.

Our country is in good hands and has a great future because of the tremendous quality of young people we have in this province.

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): On the very first day the House resumed sitting this fall, I informed members of the tornadoes that had touched down in Waterloo-Wellington in late August, causing catastrophic damage in Centre Wellington and Mapleton townships.

While I've expressed appreciation to the Minister of Community Safety and the Minister of Municipal Affairs for their willingness to tour the devastated areas of my riding and I have expressed our appreciation to the Premier for his assurance of the government's support in a telephone conversation we had on September 9, I must now inform the House that the government's initial response of \$335,100 in disaster assistance is completely and totally insufficient.

Two weeks ago, I wrote an open letter to the Minister of Municipal Affairs asking that he revisit this matter. Today I'm asking him to consider the comments in a

letter he has received from Mayor John Green of the township of Mapleton. Mayor Green writes, "While we appreciate the initial assistance of \$152,600, we are somewhat disappointed that this amount falls far short of the overall uninsured damages to public infrastructure, including costs incurred by the county of Wellington and the Grand River Conservation Authority."

I know that the government does not want to appear to be callously indifferent in response to a natural disaster occurring within the province, and I had confidence in the Premier's statements to me and Mayors John Green and Russ Spicer. I hope that my confidence was not misplaced. Therefore, I call upon the Minister of Municipal Affairs to invite representatives from the affected townships, the county of Wellington and the GRCA to meet with him and, at that meeting, announce an increase in the special assistance grant to my communities.

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): Earlier this month, there was a very special graduation held at the Marty Karl Centre in downtown Hamilton. On November 4, 16 students completed a 22-week job and life skills training course aimed at easing the transition for Hamiltonians living on social assistance to finding real, meaningful employment.

In 2001, Statistics Canada counted 14,533 Hamiltonians living on social assistance and facing physical or mental barriers to employment. Programs like this prepare people for the transition back to work and provide guidance and support for six months after they re-enter the workforce. This course boasts an 88% success rate, with graduates finding employment with companies like Dofasco, Swiss Chalet and even McMaster University.

We all need support in our lives. We all need friends and family to encourage us and to support us in our careers, no matter what path we choose. When such supports are missing in one's life, it is refreshing to know that there are places like the Marty Karl Centre that offer a helping hand.

I would like to take this time to congratulate the 16 graduates of the Marty Karl Centre's training program and to wish them the best of luck as they embark on this new journey in life. Programs like these, generously supported by our government, ensure that we are one step closer to eradicating poverty and demonstrate the caring and progressive community that is the hallmark of Hamilton.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): This year, Ontario has witnessed a record-high number of gun homicides. As the shootings mounted this summer, the Premier and his Attorney General chose to go into hibernation. A collection of poorly planned initiatives and announcements that lack detail have since followed. However, the violence has continued, and after the events of last

Friday, Ontarians have seen gun violence go to a whole new level. Once again, we've heard nothing from the Premier. The McGuinty Liberals are asleep at the switch on crime.

1340

Today, the Ontario Medical Association has released a report that says that Ontario's doctor shortage is worsening and that our health care system could collapse under the pressure of this single issue. The McGuinty Liberals are asleep at the switch on the doctor shortage.

Also today, we heard that the emergency room waiting times in Ontario are out of control, and in some cases causing death. This despite an empty promise by the current Premier to lower wait times. The McGuinty Liberals are asleep at the switch on emergency room wait times.

Today at Queen's Park, we've heard more about gridlock and its effect on the Ontario economy. However, the Premier's solution to gridlock is to use the private plane to fly from Toronto to Hamilton, leapfrogging all the gridlock on the QEW. The McGuinty Liberals are asleep at the switch on gridlock.

On the jobs front, plant closures and layoffs by major provincial employers like GM and Ford seem of no priority to the Premier. We are now told that thousands of layoffs lie on the horizon for Ontario's auto industry. The McGuinty Liberals are asleep at the switch on jobs.

DISASTER RELIEF

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): Not so long ago, at the end of the summer, this government turned its back on Hamilton's plea for help. My city asked for disaster relief following incredible flooding damage from a major storm on August 19.

Hamilton wasn't being unreasonable. Hamiltonians simply asked for help for costs not covered by property insurance, including cleanup and repairs to residences and businesses. But what was the response? Hamilton residences and businesses got nothing but a callous, negative reply from the provincial McGuinty Liberals.

Hamilton has once again been struck by misfortune by way of a natural disaster, and this time the province must come through with some financial assistance. The city was struck by a tornado on November 9. It cut a swath through several residential neighbourhoods, which suffered extensive damage. Winds from the tornado reached as high as 170 kilometres per hour. It ripped roofs off houses, toppled trees, hurled motor homes and fencing through the air, cleaving a path of destruction from the east mountain to lower Stoney Creek. Lawfield middle school was wrenched right off its foundation and needs to be completely rebuilt.

The province simply cannot turn its back on Hamilton again. Rebuilding Lawfield middle school alone will cost close to \$10 million. Some homes were rendered unliveable due to damage from the winds and flying debris. Cars were mangled, windows blown out, trees uprooted and roofs lost. The McGuinty Liberals should do the right thing for Hamilton. This tornado caused

extensive damage; the city and its residents need provincial help. Provide provincial assistance through the Ontario disaster relief assistance program so that the necessary repairs and rebuilding are undertaken swiftly and effectively.

GARTH TAYLOR

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): Today, I pay tribute to a man who has done what all of us here aspire to do: He made a difference. I speak of the late Dr. Garth Taylor, who, until his death this past Saturday, served as chief of ophthalmology at the Cornwall Community Hospital in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh.

In addition to treating patients in Cornwall, Dr. Taylor taught ophthalmology at Queen's University in Kingston. His students learned that most of those in danger of losing their eyesight could be treated by simple, low-cost medical techniques. Dr. Taylor considered it a moral obligation to help those around the world who lacked access to these treatments. Through his work with Orbis International, Dr. Taylor undertook numerous overseas missions, conducting sight-saving surgeries in some 60 countries.

Dr. Taylor faced and overcame racism in his drive to help the less fortunate of the world, sharing his vision of a world where people are judged on the merit of their skills rather than on their ethnicity. His professionalism was blind to all but the needs of his patients.

Dr. Garth Taylor has been honoured by Orbis International. He is one of Macleans magazine's 10 Canadians who made a difference in 2004, and recently received the Order of Jamaica, his home country's highest honour. To his countless patients, students and his community, he was a visionary.

It is my honour to recognize this great man today. Through his selfless actions and determination to better our world by his skills, Dr. Taylor touched the lives of countless thousands. Through them, his legacy of commitment and compassion will live on. The sympathy of the community is extended to his wife, children and family.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): I recently sat down with York regional police chief Armand La Barge. The purpose of our meeting was to have a candid conversation about policing and community safety issues that affect my constituents and, in fact, all Ontarians.

As of November 15, there have been 69 murders, of which 48 are gun-related deaths in the GTA. This government knows it has to be tough on crime. Recent initiatives include the gun amnesty program, the gangs and guns task force, stronger sentencing, 1,000 additional police officers, and requests to the federal government to amend a number of reforms to firearms offences in the Criminal Code.

Gun violence is not the only problem facing Ontarians. Marijuana grow-ops, massage parlours fronting for

prostitution, home invasions, bullying and gang violence are among the issues that communities across Ontario have to face. This government has made great strides in addressing these issues from a legislative perspective; however, these criminal acts cannot be eliminated by legislation alone. Every member of the community—civil servant or civilian—needs to participate in keeping communities safe.

Chief La Barge and I discussed the need for communities to get involved. People need to be informed about criminal activity, know what to look for, and be prepared to report any suspicious activity in their neighbourhoods. With strong legislation, a devoted police force, and communities committed to keeping their streets safe, Ontario can continue to be one of the safest—

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

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge): Recently I had the opportunity to address about 100 journalism students at Durham College as a guest speaker for their Canadian government course. The class was filled with enthusiastic and keen undergraduates eager to learn about the interaction between provincial, municipal and federal government activities.

The visit also gave me an opportunity to reflect on the McGuinty government's support for Ontario's post-secondary students. Durham College and the University of Ontario Institute of Technology have received significant capital funding from our government to support a rapidly growing student body.

I spoke with Dr. Gary Polonsky, the president of Durham College and UOIT, and with Thomas Coughlan, the president of the united student association. They wish to thank Premier McGuinty and Minister Bentley for the Reaching Higher plan. Colleges have been organizing and continue to organize events in their communities to encourage discussions on skills strategies to ensure that Ontario's workforce is prepared for the challenges of the 21st century. According to Dr. Polonsky, this plan will greatly benefit students and it will also benefit the research capacity for strategic sectors in Durham; for example, the auto manufacturing sector and energy.

The students at Durham College have proven to me that our government's commitment to Ontario's post-secondary students will continue to foster the brightest minds in the country.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE
ON ESTIMATES

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Standing order 62(a) provides that the standing committee on estimates shall present one report with respect to all of

the estimates and supplementary estimates considered pursuant to standing orders 59 and 61 no later than the third Thursday in November of each calendar year.

The House not having received a report from the standing committee on estimates for certain ministries on Thursday, November 17, 2005, as required by the standing orders of this House pursuant to standing order 62(b), the estimates before the committee of the Ministry of Tourism and Recreation and the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines are deemed to be passed by the committee and are deemed to be reported and received by the House.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PHYSICAL FITNESS DAY ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LA JOURNÉE DE L'APTITUDE PHYSIQUE

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

Bill 32, An Act proclaiming Physical Fitness Day /
Projet de loi 32, Loi proclamant la Journée de l'aptitude
physique.

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

The member may have a brief statement.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): Today we are all quite aware of the issue of obesity and how it affects the termination of life. Even this government recognizes that it's important for our students to have physical activities every single day. This bill simply proclaims the first Friday in September as Physical Fitness Day, and I commend it to your reading.

1350

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT (ORGAN DONATION EDUCATION), 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION (ÉDUCATION SUR LE DON D'ORGANES)

Mr. Levac moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 33, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to education on organ donation /
Projet de loi 33, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation à l'égard de l'éducation sur le don d'organes.

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

The member may have a brief statement.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): The bill amends the Education Act, permitting the minister to establish an organ donation education policy framework, and requires school boards to include education on the importance of organ donation in the curriculum of students in the senior division, such that every student, subject to certain expectations, who receives their OSSD will have learned

the importance of organ donation. I can only say that we need more of this. To fulfill our needs in this province, we need to start somewhere, and I think this is the place to do so.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): This is a breakthrough day for the people and the government of Ontario, and for the thousands of immigrants we welcome to our province each year. Just hours ago, I joined my federal counterpart, Minister Volpe, in signing the first-ever Canada-Ontario immigration agreement.

First of all, I would like to thank Premier Dalton McGuinty for his relentless efforts in putting Ontario's newcomers front and centre in his fight for fairness. This is the first major breakthrough in the hard-fought \$23-billion gap campaign led by our Premier.

This is indeed a proud day for all of us. We are the first Ontario government to sign an immigration agreement with the federal government. Ontario's newcomers will finally get their fair share of federal funding for services to help them get started, such as settlement services and language training.

Our government is dedicated to helping newcomers reach their full potential in Ontario. Ontario, as you know, welcomes over 125,000 newcomers every year. That's about the population of Prince Edward Island. We welcome more than half of all immigrants to Canada. This milestone agreement means a great deal to those people who choose Ontario as their home. It quadruples federal funding from \$819 per immigrant for settlement and language programs to over \$3,400 per immigrant. That's a total of \$925 million over the next five years.

This will mean expanded career-focused English-as-a-second-language training. There will be more work-focused ESL classes at higher levels so newcomers will learn the language they need to work in their professions. This will benefit as many as 30,000 more newcomers. Settlement services will also be expanded to locations such as community centres or malls in main street Ontario to reach more newcomers in their neighbourhoods.

Towns and cities will also be given funding to promote many parts of Ontario, big and small, on a new Ontario government Web site for immigrants. This is the first agreement to also involve municipalities in planning and discussions on immigration. From AMO to the city of Toronto, this agreement demonstrates that all three levels of government can work together on programs for immigrants in regions across Ontario.

Ontario's newcomers have incredible skills and an incredible drive to find jobs and raise their families. This

agreement will allow Ontario to nominate prospective immigrants who have the talents Ontario needs to stay competitive and grow our economy.

Ontario's newcomers and the front-line community-based settlement agencies have been waiting a long, long time for this agreement, and so have the government of Ontario and the people of Ontario. This government is dedicated to helping Ontario's newcomers reach their full potential and build a better life for themselves and their families. This landmark agreement will help Ontario's newcomers succeed. We know full well that when newcomers succeed, when they find a job, when they are welcomed into communities, all of Ontario succeeds. Again, I want to say this is indeed a most positive, historic day for the province of Ontario and for all Ontarians.

RENEWABLE FUELS

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): I'm pleased to rise in the House today to announce that the government was successful in securing another 975 megawatts of clean, green renewable electricity for Ontario as a result of our second request for proposals for renewable energy. The response by the private sector was tremendous. While we were seeking up to 1,000 megawatts of clean, green renewable power, we received proposals that were well over 2,000 megawatts.

I'm pleased to report to the House that we have now signed agreements for nine new energy projects. Eight of these are wind power projects and one is water power, for a combined total capacity of 975 megawatts. To put this in perspective, 975 megawatts of clean, green, renewable power is enough electricity for over 250,000 homes. Together with the 395 megawatts achieved in our first request for proposals for renewable energy, these nine projects will have a combined capacity of 1,370 megawatts, exceeding our commitment to generate 1,350 megawatts of renewable energy.

With the leadership of this government, we are making Ontario a leader in wind power in Canada. With this announcement we are increasing Ontario's wind power capacity 80-fold and more than doubling Canada's current wind power production. We will continue to bring more renewable energy on-line.

This additional renewable energy will move us further toward our 2010 goal of generating 2,700 megawatts of renewable energy. All these renewable projects will have a tremendous benefit for Ontario's economy and Ontario's environment. The projects will spur economic development in the renewable energy sector and will bring an estimated \$2 billion of new investment to Ontario. If we include the economic benefits of our first RFP, these projects have a total estimated value of \$2.7 billion.

Renewable energy projects help diversify our supply, reduce our transmission costs and reduce peak load demands. These projects will provide tax revenues to municipalities, create jobs in rural communities and offer

income to farmers and other landowners. These projects will help clean up our environment by reducing our dependency on fossil fuels and will advance our Kyoto obligations. This is another major step forward for renewable power in Ontario.

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

1400

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I want to speak today on behalf of the hundreds of thousands of immigrants living in Ontario who have come to Canada, and specifically Ontario, under false expectations—expectations that have been set by an immigration system that places priority on advanced education, professional training and career experience. I speak on behalf of those immigrants because we have thousands of those people in our communities today who expected that they would be able to come here and make positive contributions to their communities, and they are today seeking to make a living on behalf of their families. They cannot become integrated into their communities because we have a system that puts up barriers to their becoming involved in their professions and getting jobs in this province today.

This announcement today carries a big number that surely will impress some, and it's going to give much-needed headlines to a federal government that is on the eve of an election. With the multibillions of federal surplus, the question I have is, why has this minister signed an agreement that is going to take five years to phase in?

This announcement today is couched with waffle words that mean nothing to the fathers and mothers who are desperate for an opportunity to earn an income and to work in their professions. Former governments tried to sign agreements and to get the federal government to the table. They were unable to do that. This government has tried for two years, and not until the eve of a federal election did the Premier allow himself to be used by the federal government as a campaign tool to go into this next election.

Finally, Minister, you admitted in estimates that you would have no control over how these funds would be spent. You admitted in estimates that these funds would not be controlled by the Ontario government, that they would be transferred directly to settlement agencies. I say to you, that is letting the people of Ontario and taxpayers down. You have not done a good job in negotiating this agreement—not at all—on behalf of the people of this province.

RENEWABLE FUELS

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): John Tory and the opposition are completely in favour of renewable energy solutions. What Ontario citizens want, however, is reliable, safe and affordable energy for the future.

Minister, your policies are a clear indication today that we are going to have short supply and higher prices. This

troubles Ontario. Renewable is laudable, but most of the experts would tell you, and I'm sure you know, that this is often referred to as an intermittent power source, not to form part of the base load. This is clearly no solution. One third of the energy from wind is not available most of the time. The other part of the equation is, at what price?

You should know that our critic, John Yakabuski, is actually in Atikokan today. He's trying to settle Atikokan as well as the troubled communities where not only the pulp and paper industries are worried about your policies.

Minister, this file that you have is clearly mismanaged under your leadership and under the prior Minister of Energy's as well. I can tell you with some certainty that Ontario is indeed disappointed to this point in time, not just with the policy announcement today and the fact that it's too little, too late.

The ultimate question that remains in everyone's mind is, when will we see some of this new energy on the grid? This summer, we had enumerable blackouts, near blackouts and brownouts. We've seen hundreds of jobs lost in the pulp and paper, forestry and petrochemical industries; in fact, our natural resource industry is struggling under the high prices of this government.

Minister, when are you going to tell the people of Ontario the other part of this RFP process: energy at what price? The people of Ontario, indeed the businesses of Ontario, are depending on your having an effective energy policy as we move forward. You know this policy is all about our economy, and you are putting it at great risk. I'm disappointed in this announcement today.

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): It's amazing what an upcoming federal election will do to bring about an agreement that for two years the federal and provincial Liberals could not manage to get. It's what James Travers in the Toronto Star called an election piñata, full of goodies and promises in return for another Liberal mandate.

Let's get to the real issue that is of importance to immigrants. Since 1980, the percentage of immigrants living below the poverty line has risen from 17% to 20%, while the trend for non-immigrants tracked down below 15%. Immigrants are less likely to be consistently employed, enjoy the benefits of belonging to a union or be well paid. In fact, more than 35% of those who have lived here for less than five years earn low incomes.

Why does it take new immigrants today more than 10 years to catch up with their Canadian peers? Very simply, neither the federal nor the provincial government has concrete plans to deal with immigrant poverty, re-vamp the settlement sector or allow professionals trained abroad to practise their professions in this country. In spite of the good intentions, more money will not change the fact that there is no concrete plan to improve the lot of immigrants in this province. Even though the ministry has more money, the Ministry of Citizenship does not

have, in my view, the expertise or the leverage to provide foreign-trained professionals living in Ontario with accreditation and jobs.

In the 2003 campaign platform, McGuinty made the following promise: "We will require that all Ontario trades and professions accelerate the entry of qualified new Canadians. If after one year any profession or trade has not eliminated barriers to entry, we will act."

Two years into the Liberal mandate, and only a few weeks ago, I questioned the Minister of Citizenship in estimates about his ministry's progress in the different professional fields. By his answers, it was clear to me that very little progress has been made. With all due respect, the minister is just talking with different regulatory bodies, but has gotten nowhere in terms of licensing foreign-trained professionals—professional engineers, teachers, doctors or social workers. By his own admission, he said that he had little power over licence-granting bodies.

When the Liberals promised action, immigrants were expecting more than discussion and talk; they wanted to practise their profession. You have some money now; it will do some useful things. Let's see you come up with a real plan.

RENEWABLE FUELS

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): To respond to the Minister of Energy: another day in the Legislature and another day where the McGuinty government tries to pretend that an announcement makes up for the lack of an electricity policy. Here we have another dribble, another drab, but still no plan and no policy for the supply of electricity or the price of electricity in Ontario. The McGuinty government wants to pretend that they are defenders of a public electricity system, but what we see now is private, profit-driven nuclear at the Bruce, and private, profit-driven companies in all of the announcements today. What do we know that this does to the price of electricity? We know that wherever you find privately owned, profit-driven electricity, it's at least 20% more expensive than publicly owned, not-for-profit electricity. So every day, as the McGuinty Liberal government makes these announcements, more and more of our electricity system is passing into the hands of profit-driven private companies, and the price of electricity is being driven through the roof.

When I listen to the Minister of Energy make these announcements, it's as if she doesn't hear the pulp and paper mills across northern Ontario, which keep saying to the McGuinty government, "It's the price. The price is too high. The price is driving us out of business. The price is causing the layoff of thousands of workers." It's as if the McGuinty government didn't hear General Motors when earlier this year they said that their hydro bill at the Oshawa plant is 93% higher than it was two years ago. So what has GM announced today? The layoff of over 3,000 workers.

Minister, you can make these announcements over and over again, but you're still missing the point. Your policy

of driving electricity rates through the roof is killing thousands of good-paying manufacturing jobs in Ontario—the pulp industry, the steel industry and now the auto sector. These announcements—a drib here, a drab there—are no excuse. They are no substitute for a real electricity policy in the province of Ontario.

1410

GORDON SMITH

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader):

On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent for a member of each party to speak for up to five minutes to recognize the passing of former member of provincial Parliament Gordon Smith.

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

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I want to say to the House that it is indeed an honour for me to stand here today and pay tribute to a former member of this House, Gordon Elsworth Smith, who passed away earlier this year, in June, after contracting pneumonia at the age of 86.

Gord was born in November 1918, and that was the beginning of a life full of many, many accomplishments. As a young man, Gord became involved in a wide range of ideas and topics that interested him. As his close friend and former CFRB radio personality Pete McGarvey has said, “Gord Smith was quite simply a giant in the 20th century life of Orillia. He was a man of vision, passion and energy, blessed with huge talents in mechanics, electronics, music and the art of living, a man endowed with common sense and the common touch.”

Gord actually started into radio at the age of 18 in Kitchener. In 1942 he started a Parry Sound radio station and, as far as I know, was the youngest person to ever own a radio station up to that point. He moved that station to Orillia in 1945 and it became known as CFOR. It's now called JACK-FM; it's one of the Rogers stations. Gord actually operated that station until 1964. After that, he operated a Volkswagen dealership in Orillia and had that dealership until 1971.

But to the city of Orillia's and the riding of Simcoe East's credit, Gord became an impressive member of the provincial Legislature. He ran in 1967. As a strong community leader and an excellent constituency member, he easily won four elections as the member for Simcoe East. His Premiers at that time of course were the Honourable John Robarts and the Honourable William Davis.

Gord retired as the MPP for Simcoe East in 1981, but soon after was appointed as a justice of the peace and served both the Orillia and Midland parts of the riding.

I want to say a couple of things about Gord Smith while I'm here today on just what kind of constituency person he really was. I can remember that as a very young guy we needed some severance work done on some land we owned and there were some problems with the township. My dad called Gord and asked him if there was any chance he could meet him some time or write a

letter or whatever needed doing, and Gord actually came to our house for breakfast on a Sunday morning and talked about the issue. I thought at that point, if that's the kind of constituency person you've got in an MPP, that shows you what a great man he was.

I have to tell you very briefly that I also ran into Gord as a JP. He actually fined me \$25 one time. I never had a proper hydro permit. I pled guilty and I paid the \$25, but I wanted to put that on the record. I don't want any skeletons in my closet.

He retired in 1995 as a JP at the age of 75 and he kept a very active lifestyle after that. He had a huge collection of antique cars, including a Stanley Steamer, and was present in all of the fall fairs and parades etc. that we had in Orillia. He was an active member of the Kiwanis Golden K and the Champlain Golden K, and in music, where he played piano in a band right up until his death. In fact, just last January, Sean Conway was the guest speaker at the Sir John A. Macdonald dinner, and Sean acknowledged Gord. Gord was playing the piano that evening and Sean, who was the guest speaker, paid a very special tribute to Gord that evening.

I just want to say that he's missed already in the city of Orillia and in the community.

I want to introduce his family who are here today. They've come from great distances to be with us. I know Gord's wife, Jean, is no longer with us, but his children are here today: Linda and her husband, Murray Finn, of Elliot Lake, and Paul is here as well, from Vancouver. He was a speechwriter with the Davis and Robarts governments for a couple of years. John and Susan Smith of Hanover are here. John and Susan's children—Martha, and her husband, Dan, and son, Andrew, and his friend Jessica—and Susan's mother, Elma, of Orillia, all are here in the audience today. They came a great distance to be part of this.

In closing, on behalf of our caucus and, I hope, on behalf of all members of this House, we thank the Smith family for being here and for allowing their father to serve in this wonderful House for 14 years of his life. Thank you very much, everyone.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I'm proud, on behalf of New Democrats here at Queen's Park, to be able to pay tribute to this truly great Ontarian, this outstanding member of the provincial Legislature, this pioneer in radio broadcasting in the province of Ontario and in this country—a man who, when he announced his retirement in 1981, said it was because of ill health, and that was at the age of 62. Well, for decades after that, Gord Smith continued to serve his community, continued to be a dear and loved member of his family and continued to be very much on the leading edge, quite frankly, of anything and everything he did.

I was fortunate to be able to call upon people like Elizabeth Diehl, one of our staff people who goes back to when Gord Smith was here in this Legislature. My predecessor Mel Swart fondly recalls his service, along with so many others in an era when politics was, in many respects, far more colourful, far more intimate and far more collegial.

I want to tell the Smith family that Gord Smith was held in regard by members of every political party and certainly by his own colleagues. I not only talked to the people involved in the political scene but spoke as well—and came across this person just by happenstance—to someone who appeared in front of His Worship, Justice of the Peace Smith. That was before I learned that Garfield Dunlop was a scofflaw of some notoriety up in his riding. The gentleman I spoke to and his version of the events is oh, so consistent with scofflaw Garfield Dunlop—“outlaw Dunlop,” I suppose he might be known as from this point on. As a lawyer, I should have reminded him that you never confess, and here he’s done it in Hansard. The recipient of His Worship’s justice whom I spoke with recalled that justice as being handed out in an extremely polite and courteous way, in a kind and temperate way, and tempered with good nature and a true concern for the welfare of the community.

We all know about the Stanley Steamer, but perhaps more significant was the 1912 Tudhope steamer that Gord Smith himself restored, and of special significance because Tudhope, as one of Canada’s earliest automobile manufacturers, had its home in Orillia. Among the scores and scores of antique automobiles that he restored and maintained and that he shared with his community in parade after parade and in public event after public event, it is this Tudhope that I’m sure had a special spot in Gord Smith’s heart.

There’s a Toronto Liberal politician—I can’t remember his name off the top of my head—who doesn’t let people forget that he brought the Rolling Stones to Toronto. Let me tell you, that pales in comparison to bringing Bob Hope to Orillia in 1957 to flick the switch at Gord Smith’s radio station when they doubled the wattage it put out. Think about it, my friends: In 1957, Bob Hope was bigger than the Beatles, the Stones and Bob Dylan combined. Gord Smith, as a broadcaster, sensitive to the Canadiana around him and immersed in Canadian culture, had the very earliest live broadcast of Canadian icon Gordon Lightfoot, himself yet another native son of Orillia.

So Gord Smith was truly somebody who deserves this eulogizing here at Queen’s Park today. He served his community and his province with joy, with wit, with kindness and with maturity. He was a Progressive Conservative, and he had the regard of his allies and his opponents. He served well beyond what could be expected. He also served in an era when constituency budgets were non-existent. So we have to recall that his wife, your mother, played such an important role, as spouses did for MPPs in those days, answering the phone, doing constituency work on their own behalf, and I’m sure his kids were involved with that on more than a few occasions as well. So I salute your mom. We all salute your dad, and we tell you that we’re proud to be in the place where he served with such dignity and served so many people for so long.

1420

Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I rise today to pay

tribute to one of our own, Gordon Smith, who was a member of this Legislature from 1967 to 1981. While I did not have the honour of knowing or serving with Mr. Smith personally, I do know that he was a credit to this House and to politics.

I have to say that, reading about him, he was my kind of guy. He was the kind of man any of us would be privileged to know, a man of wide-ranging interests and dedication. He was first elected for the Conservatives in the riding of Simcoe East in 1967 and was re-elected in 1971, 1975 and 1977. He served as the deputy whip, chair of caucus and deputy chairman of the committee of the whole House. As a parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Industry and Tourism, he travelled on trade missions to China, Cuba, England, Japan and the Soviet Union. When a heart condition forced him to retire from politics in 1981, Gordon Smith said, “The only thing closer to me than my riding is my family.”

I’m told he was a man of many interests and enthusiasm. When he was 18, he began a career in radio in Kitchener and later became the youngest Canadian to own a radio station. In 1942, he moved the radio station from Parry Sound to Orillia and operated there until 1964, when he sold it to Maclean Hunter. After that sale, many people would probably be tempted to retire, but not Gordon Smith. He went on to operate a car dealership until 1971. Cars were one of his major passions. At one point, he owned about 50 antique cars and machines. His favourite, as we’ve heard, was a 1911 Stanley Steamer.

After politics, he served as a justice of the peace in the provincial offences court. Even in his twilight years, he played piano for the Golden K seniors’ orchestra, the Music Makers. Pete McGarvey, the long-time program director for CFOR, said, “He was a man of vision, passion and energy, blessed with huge talents in mechanics, electronics, music and the art of living, a man with common sense and the common touch.”

Gordon Smith was married to his wife of almost 60 years, the former Jean Studiman. He had sons, Paul and John, and a daughter, Linda, and their spouses. He was the grandfather of 12 and the great-grandfather of five. As his son John put it, “Whether it was radio, politics or working as a justice of the peace, he loved working with people.”

I know the sympathies of the House go out to the Smith family. I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I’d like to thank the members for their remarks and assure the family of all of our condolences and sympathies. I will see that the Hansard of these remarks is forwarded to the family.

ORAL QUESTIONS

LAYOFFS

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. Premier, in responding to the unprecedented 3,660 job losses in Ontario announced this

morning by General Motors, you said that Ontarians can take “some consolation” in the losses, as Ontario can withstand the cuts. You also referred to it as “a little bit of contraction.”

Families in Oshawa and St. Catharines are staring at an uncertain future with the loss of significant numbers of paycheques for those communities, and communities that are already dealing with literally thousands of layoffs announced in this sector this year alone will suffer more body blows. I'm not sure how much consolation they can take from any of that, and I'm not sure they would describe this as “a little bit of contraction.”

I'm not sure if that was your entire answer to these communities or to these people this morning, but I give you the opportunity to tell us what you're going to do specifically in response to this devastating news from General Motors today.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this. It's a very important issue, not just from a broader economic perspective but of course in a very immediate sense to those families that are affected by this.

My understanding is that GM's intention is to ensure that any ensuing layoffs are the result of attrition. There's no way for me to make any magical commitments about how we might somehow bring an end to that process on the part of GM and those cuts.

There is some upside to this, and I'll speak to that in greater detail in the following questions, but I can say that while the plant here contributes 25% of North American output, we are only going to be the subject of 10% of job reductions. That doesn't diminish it, and it was never my intention, I say to the leader of the official opposition, to somehow minimize or diminish the importance of this issue to those families that are affected.

Mr. Tory: Premier, you were quoted in a November 9 story in the Toronto Star as acknowledging 40,000 job losses in manufacturing since you took office. You've also said that Ontarians should expect some “painful” times ahead, to use your words. You made this statement as well: “It's our job as government to find a way to strengthen people so they can find security, not so much in a job, but in employability.”

Premier, what exactly does that mean for the 3,660 men and women who will lose their jobs in Oshawa and St. Catharines, as well as the 1,100 families affected by Ford's cuts in Windsor and the 500 to 1,000 families that will see no paycheque as a result of the Chrysler cuts in Brampton, Etobicoke and Windsor? Specifically, what are you going to do for this group of men and women, these thousands of people affected by these layoffs, to give these people, to use your words, “security in employability”? Specifically, what are you going to do?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, I think it's really important to keep these particular statistics in some perspective. The fact of the matter is that since we first earned the privilege of serving Ontarians as their government, this Ontario economy, the hard-working people of

Ontario and the entrepreneurs in particular have generated 214,000 net new jobs. I think that's very significant. We have lost some jobs in the manufacturing sector; there's no doubt about that. But I think it's important, as I say, to keep in mind the overall picture.

Something else by way of helpful information, I think: In the month of February 2001, when the Conservatives were in power, 38,000 jobs were lost in that month alone. That was the second-highest single job loss in a month ever in the history of our province. Again, I'm pleased that we have generated 214,000 new jobs, net, since the beginning of our term.

Mr. Tory: I'm not sure exactly how the several thousand jobs that I've outlined qualifies as “some jobs” that have been lost. But notwithstanding, Premier, in a Globe and Mail story on June 9 of this year, your Minister of Economic Development confirmed that General Motors could cut 4,000 jobs over the next nine years and still receive \$435 million in government funding. I want to quote from the story: “The federal and provincial governments signed the Beacon deal with GM Canada to ensure that job numbers in the auto sector will be maintained.”

General Motors already announced between 1,000 and 1,500 layoffs in the latest round of bargaining with the Canadian Auto Workers. Today, they announced that 3,660 jobs would be lost. It would seem that the 4,000 job-layoff maximum cited by your minister has been significantly exceeded already. What are you planning to do, in view of this, to protect the interests of the Ontario taxpayers?

1430

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I am—and I will make no apologies for this—much more optimistic, much more bullish about our economy than is the leader of the official opposition. Let's be specific here: On the auto sector alone, in our first two years-plus on the job, we have secured \$4.5 billion worth of new investment. For the first time since the invention of the car, we're the number one auto producer in North America. So I will not tolerate any notion that somehow we are backsliding when it comes to the auto sector in the province of Ontario. We're at the highest point in our history when it comes to securing a strong economic advantage on the auto score.

I am also pleased to say that when it comes to the Beacon project, something that the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, Joe Cordiano, worked very hard on, that is going full-steam ahead. That's a \$2.5-billion investment project that's going to see 1,000 new jobs. In addition, GM announced an additional \$400-million investment in the Oshawa and St. Catharines plants just last week. In St. Catharines alone, that means 150 new jobs.

VIOLENT CRIME

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): I'm sure the people who are losing their jobs will take great comfort from all that.

My question is for the Premier. Yesterday I visited the West Albion Seventh-day Adventist Church, the scene of Friday's funeral shooting, the 48th gun death in Toronto so far this year. I'm sure I speak for all members in conveying our sense of grief for the families, for the congregation of that church, for the community, for the black community and for our city.

I saw the bullet holes in the church windows and the marks on the ground where the victim was gunned down, and it was easy to see that this whole thing had reached a new and even more unacceptable stage. My question to the Premier is, what additional actions and measures do you propose to take, and what leadership do you intend to show in light of this thing reaching a new and even more unacceptable stage? What are you going to do?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): Let me take this opportunity to express on behalf of not just our party, not just our government, but indeed on behalf of all Ontarians our terrible concern connected with this endless string of tragedies affecting not only the lives of the young people involved and their potential, but their families, their friends and their communities.

I know that our police are working as hard as they can on this to try to grapple with it. I just got off the phone with Chief Blair; I had another conversation with him in that regard. I know that our courts are working as well. I just got off the phone with Chief Justice Lennox. What I've asked is that they meet with me. I've asked Chief Blair to come in; I've asked Chief Justice Lennox or his designate. I've spoken with the Attorney General about this. I know that many of us are doing much, but I think there are other things we might do, and by exploring that—

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

Mr. Tory: I'm happy to hear that these meetings are proposed to take place, because the people in these communities told me throughout the summer, and told me again yesterday, that they're looking for leadership from their elected leaders, through their words, through meetings, but even more importantly, of course, through actions. They need you, as the leader of this province, to speak up and speak out on these issues. I think they're looking for a greater sense of urgency from their governments, including the government of Ontario.

The police and the people in these communities tell me—they've told me over and over again, as recently as yesterday—that they need more information from more people who are willing to come forward in respect of these crimes. Back in October, your minister made a very general announcement about helping victims and witnesses, assigning staff and so on. Can you tell us specifically what actions have been taken since that time a few weeks ago? What staff have been assigned, when and where? Can you tell us that?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): I'm assuming that the leader of the official opposition is

speaking not only to the announcement with respect to the expansion of the guns and gangs task force but also with respect to the witness protection program. I can tell you that the announcement on the expansion of the guns and gangs task force, which took place approximately three weeks ago, saw 26 additional police officers and 32 additional crowns being added to the task force. As of today, 24 of those 32 crowns are at their desks, at work on the guns and gangs task force, and we anticipate that by the end of the month the full complement will be in place. That is going to mean a very, very big difference, and amount to an unprecedented effort in terms of law enforcement collaborating and working together like never before to deal with the horrible, horrible guns and—

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mr. Tory: I'm sorry to say this, but that answer was just not responsive to what I asked about, which was the assistance being given, as you said you would do, to people so they could come forward and feel comfort in coming forward and being protected. The answer is utterly unresponsive. It's so frustrating.

I'll direct this question to the Premier again, because this relates to a meeting he had. I think, with respect, we have to do better than this and we have to not only raise this issue, but appear to raise it on your priority list. Person after person commented yesterday on the fact that people are not coming forward with information with respect to these cases. One thing that representatives of the community recommended in a meeting they had with you was the creation of a neighbourhood intervention unit, a community intervention unit, a kind of Crime Stoppers run by the community itself, so people could feel comfortable phoning their information in and knowing that it would be handled, not by the police or by somebody close to the police, which they think Crime Stoppers is, but by people in the community.

In view of the need for help, in view of the need for people to come forward, can you tell us, are you willing to give this idea a try? What thought have you given to it since those people were in your office telling you they thought this would help a great deal?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: Absolutely. We are moving forward on that, but I think it's important to know that we do have, right now, a tip line set up. Crime Stoppers has a tip line set up. You can call in to that number and you do not have to provide identification; you can be anonymous. If you can provide a tip that leads to an illegal handgun being taken off the street, then there are rewards for that.

I'm disappointed to say that when this proposal was put forward and when I and Chief Blair and Minister Kwinter helped launch this particular proposal for the tips line, it met with nothing but criticism from the official opposition—nothing but criticism. I say, let's work together on these initiatives that can make a difference and, as the leader of the official opposition often says but never does, let's put politics aside and work together to try to make our streets safer.

The Speaker: New question. The leader of the third party.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): Premier, on Friday at a west-end Toronto church where people had gathered to mourn the shooting death of 17-year-old Jamal Hemmings, 18-year-old Amon Beckles was shot down.

Premier, in the name of Toronto's 17 murder victims so far this year, their families and all who live in fear, when is the McGuinty government going to address Toronto's gun violence with the urgency it deserves?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The leader of the NDP will know that not only has our government been very active in this area, working hard to address both the crime itself and the causes of the crime, but so has the federal government, I would argue, particularly in recent days. Our Toronto police are working actively; our courts are working as hard as they can as well.

To remind the leader of the NDP of some of the progress that we have made with respect to attacking these issues, he will know about our guns and gangs task force. He will know that we have in place 34 new judges, 50 new crown attorneys, 55 more probation officers. He will know that we are seeking tougher penalties in the Criminal Code. He will know that we are the first jurisdiction in North America to enshrine mandatory gunshot wound reporting legislation. He will know that we brought in new tools for prosecutors; we're working hard to improve the witness protection program; we're blitzing gun businesses, and we've launched a gun amnesty program, to list—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Hampton: Premier, in August, when you last addressed this issue, you said, "The overwhelming majority of residents in the community are peace-loving, hospitable, warm, engaging people." Since your engagement at that time, 25 more young people have been shot down. Our streets, our neighbourhoods and our communities are losing young people at an incredible rate to gun violence. Yes, you've made a lot of announcements, but when you talk to people out there in the community, they're very clear: None of it is effective. None of it is stopping the gun violence. I ask you, Premier, when are you going to treat the issue of gun violence in Toronto with the urgency it deserves?

1440

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: In addition to those initiatives that I just listed, which I happen to believe are important and which I happen to believe are making a positive difference, we've also funded pre-apprenticeship pilot projects for high-risk youth, we've helped fund a summer jobs program with the city of Toronto targeting youth from high-risk neighbourhoods, and we're bringing in new legislation making it mandatory to continue to learn until the age of 18.

To repeat something I said earlier—I know the leader of the NDP is going to want to be very supportive of this—I know that the federal government has been working hard on this issue, as has our government, as has

our police, as has Mayor Miller, and the judges and the court system as a whole. But I think there might be a few things that we have overlooked. Hence, I have asked representatives of those areas if they might not meet with me so that we might compare our initiatives and see what it is that we might better do together to address this very pressing and very urgent issue.

Mr. Hampton: I've met with representatives from many of these neighbourhoods. I've met with a lot of youth from these communities. You know what they say about your pilot projects? "Pilot projects are not the answer. What is needed are across-the-board strategies, not pilot projects that end after six months." You talk about youth employment this summer. A couple of hundred young people employed this summer is not the answer when we're talking about thousands of young people who can't find a place in the real-world economy.

This is what Sandra Carnegie-Douglas of the Coalition of African Canadian Organizations says: "This is devastating. Lives are being completely eliminated.

"We've made the point over and over about the rate at which our young men are dying, but the response from the government shows they are not taking it seriously."

Premier, the time for photo ops is over. What is your action plan for the people who are being shot—

The Speaker: Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Just so we're clear, when I met with the East Scarborough Boys and Girls Club, I did so without giving notice to the media. When I met with Operation Springboard, I did so without giving notice to the media. When I met with the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, I did so without giving notice to the media. When I met with the Jamaican Canadian Association, I think notice was given to the media, but not by me, and I did not speak to the media after that.

We have, in fact, been working very hard, in a very determined and very sincere fashion. This is a very, very urgent and pressing issue. We had yet another horrific example, a shooting just outside a funeral service at a church. I don't think there's anybody left in the province of Ontario who has not been affected by this seemingly endless string of shootings in some kind of a profound way. I think the next best step for us to take at this point in time, given the sincere efforts made by various levels of government, and in particular by our police, is to bring the parties together and explore what it is we might better do by working together than we have been individually.

LAYOFFS

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): Premier, today General Motors has announced that it's cutting 3,600 jobs: It will eliminate a shift at Ontario's car plant 1 and shut down car plant 2 entirely. To put this in perspective, General Motors is eliminating one out of every five GM jobs in Ontario. What is your government's plan to address what is obviously a very serious loss for Ontario's economy and a most-serious-of-all loss to people who work in Oshawa and St. Catharines?

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

Hon. Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): Let's put this in some perspective. The fact is, there are 30,000 job cuts being announced across the entire continent, and at the end of the day, what GM has made clear is that these layoffs will be through attrition and early retirement. As a result, the impact on individuals will be minimized to the greatest extent possible.

The reality is that GM has been facing an enormous challenge for months now as a result of the restructuring that's taking place in the auto sector worldwide. We are not immune to that. We have, with the Beacon project, a \$2.5-billion investment that GM is making in Ontario to make certain that Ontario is going to be at the forefront when it comes to auto production on this continent.

Mr. Hampton: The minister talks about perspective. Let's put this in perspective. GM doesn't manufacture cars in Quebec or Nova Scotia or Manitoba or Alberta; they manufacture them in Ontario, and all the job losses are happening in Ontario.

Let's put this in perspective. This is on top of 42,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs that have already been lost under the McGuinty government.

Let's put this in perspective. Every time you lose one of those auto assembly jobs, the multiplier says you lose seven more as it ripples through the economy. That translates into 25,000 jobs.

I have asked you a very serious question on behalf of all those workers and those families who will have no idea now how they will pay the bills and what will happen to them. What is the McGuinty government's plan for a loss of jobs in Ontario that is obviously very serious?

Hon. Mr. Cordiano: As I said, there are going to be losses or layoffs through attrition and early retirement. This does not impact the individuals who have jobs and will continue to have jobs at GM.

Let's also recognize that the \$2.5-billion investment is very important to Ontario's economy. It's going to give Ontario's economy a big boost, and \$2.5 billion shouldn't be overlooked as a significant investment made in this province.

I would remind the member that when they were in government, during their entire term, they lost a total of 74,000 net jobs. There were 500,000 people out of work. You were losing 1,500 people, in terms of jobs, a month. That's a record that you should not stand up and have any pride in.

Mr. Hampton: The McGuinty government, I swear, one of these days is going to go back to the Great Depression to try to find somebody to blame.

Look, here's the reality, Minister. Some 4,000 people—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Stop the clock.

Leader of the third party.

Mr. Hampton: Here's the reality: Close to 4,000 people are going to be out of work. And don't tell us that this is all going to be by attrition. You are not going to reduce 4,000 jobs in Oshawa by simply saying, "Here, you take retirement." This means people are going to be laid off.

But there's something else happening here. You were quick to trumpet contributing \$235 million of Ontario's money to General Motors. Here's the reality for those workers today: General Motors has \$235 million of Ontario's money. What about the 4,000 jobs, Minister?

Hon. Mr. Cordiano: I would like to know what the leader of the third party is suggesting—that somehow we not have made that investment and given up on the \$2.5-billion investment?

Furthermore, I would add that with respect to the \$235-million investment that this province is making, those dollars will only be paid out after the investments are made. That hasn't happened yet; no dollars have been paid out.

I would add that when the NDP was in government, in February 1991, 50,000 jobs were lost in that month alone.

What are we doing? We are creating a positive, growing economy with an unemployment rate of 6.4% and 214,000 new jobs. That's my answer to the member. New jobs are being created. This economy is moving forward.

1450

VIOLENT CRIME

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. Premier, I'd like to come back to the issue of crime. You've indicated, in your answers earlier on today—and I should say, by the way, that I've had a long list of meetings without the media as well. What's helpful about those is that people speak to you very candidly in terms of the things they think need to be done in the community to help with this problem. I'm delighted as well to hear that you have the community leaders coming in again—that's a good thing—but you had them in earlier this year and they told you specifically something that I asked you about and you referred to the Attorney General earlier on. They told you something that would be very important: to set up this community intervention unit, which would help people to feel comfortable coming forward and sharing with their own community members information that will help track down a lot of these crimes that haven't been solved.

Since they had that meeting with you, probably another dozen have lost their lives in these crimes. I'm asking you this: Will you stand up today, based on the last meeting they had with you, and say you're willing to give this idea a try? Because that's what they told you they thought would be helpful to get the police on top of this.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): It may very well have been

that that idea was raised at a particular meeting. I cannot recollect it. Minister Chambers, who was with me, cannot recall that being raised either, but I don't think that's really the issue here. This is yet another idea. It could very well be a very good idea, and we're prepared to consider that and any others. But the purpose of bringing together the stakeholders and the leaders in the justice system is to explore those and other possibilities so that we can do a better job collectively of addressing this terrible issue.

Mr. Tory: One of the things that people said yesterday, and they've said it all summer, is the incredible frustration they feel at the fact that governments don't appear to work together and that people don't appear to put politics aside, to use the expression that was used earlier. I wonder, in an effort to make these meetings more effective, to address the concerns articulated by people in these communities about governments not working together and politics playing too big a part in all this, whether the Premier would consider, in the meetings that he's convening, inviting a representative of both of the opposition parties and, at the same time, perhaps having someone from the other levels of government, namely the city of Toronto and the government of Canada, come to that meeting so that maybe for once we can all sit in the room, we can all listen to what people from the community have to say and we can all perhaps even decide together to do something about this problem that is starting to overcome our city. Will you consider that?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I have a different kind of meeting in mind, so I'm not prepared to endorse that particular proposal—certainly not at this time. I have a different kind of meeting in mind. It is very specific and very focused and it's action oriented. It has to do with what it is we can and should be doing together when it comes to maximizing the enforcement of the law. That's what I'm talking about right now. We've got some great ideas that we've initiated, more that we have yet to announce with respect to attacking the causes of crime, but right now we want to attack crime harder and faster. So the purpose of bringing in a representative of the judges, a representative of the police and a representative of the crown attorney is to find out what we can do together to attack crime faster and harder. That's the purpose of this meeting. It is very specific and it is action oriented.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Minister of Health. Minister, hospitals and doctors alike are frustrated by your government's e-health initiative. The chief information officer at William Osler says that many hospitals are now pursuing their own technology agenda because of a lack of a clear plan from the government and a breakdown in communications with Smart Systems. She says that there has been a lot of staff hired for the project but no deliverables, and it's

very discouraging to see money going into this hole with no results. There's been little transparency and accountability, negative responses to freedom of information requests, and an overall sense that it's "largely a mystery" as to where the money has been spent.

Minister, how has this project become such a mess?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'm the first to acknowledge that we can and will do better with Smart Systems for Health, but I do find that it's very easy, it seems, for people in health care, like the person that you've quoted, to make a swath of comments that are truly negative but without regard for reality.

Just as one example, a long-awaited project that Smart Systems for Health has been involved in helping to implement which is coming to life in Ontario hospital emergency rooms today and on other days across the breadth of our province gives emergency room physicians the capacity of checking Ontario drug benefit records to determine what drug use is there. This is an important part of helping to deal with medication-use errors, particularly related to our seniors.

This is a project that Smart Systems for Health has delivered over the course of the last few months. We will be moving forward soon with significant alterations to the governance strategy as it relates to Smart Systems for Health, but there is a long list of deliverables that they have delivered on, demonstrating good value, but with more work to be done.

Ms. Martel: To put it in perspective, the project is a year behind schedule, some \$260 million has already been spent, and there's still no electronic patient record in hospitals, emergency rooms or clinics. From my perspective, this project makes Andersen/Accenture look good.

The prevailing view about the project, and the minister knows this, is that there has been little accountability, little transparency, little direction from your government, a whole lot of staff being hired, and a whole lot of money being spent with very little having been produced.

Minister, in light of the significant amount of money that has been spent so far with very little being produced, are you prepared to refer the matter to the Auditor General so he can get to the bottom of it and try and sort out what should happen next?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I have no position on the issue of the involvement of the Auditor General. Suffice it to say, the Auditor General enjoys sufficient powers that, if this is an area that they wish to be involved in, that poses no challenge and we'll be very supportive.

I just want to say that, while acknowledging there's more that can be done and acknowledging that we're moving forward with governance changes at Smart Systems, I think it's important that we not get too sucked into the use of a blanket statement, wiping out the value of projects that have gone on there.

One other additional example: the integrated public health information system. A key finding related to our SARS challenge was the inability through good systems

to track what was going on in terms of cases. We've been working hard, and Smart Systems has been the lead in developing the integrated public health software, which is in the midst of being installed in public health units across the province of Ontario; one more example of good investment which is offering good protection for Ontarians.

STUDENT SAFETY

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): My question is to the Minister of Education. As a former teacher, a parent and now as a representative of the people of Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh, I am acutely aware of the importance our school system plays in the lives of our youth. The skills and lessons they learn within these educational institutions are ones that will serve them later in life when the care of this province falls to them.

It is a sad fact of today's reality, however, that some of the experiences our students are exposed to are negative. Certainly among the worst of these harmful experiences is bullying. Victims are forced to live in a state of fear that can affect their self-confidence and the way they integrate with their peers and family. The bullies, if not taught that their actions are intolerable in our society, come to believe that intimidation and violence are acceptable.

Minister, you recently announced that it will be mandatory for all schools in Ontario to have an anti-bullying program, for which I commend you. Can you tell us how this will benefit our students?

Hon. Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): I appreciate the question from the member opposite, who I know, having toured schools with him, is very well aware of this insidious part of human nature, some people would say. What we are saying with our cross-provincial initiative is that it's an unacceptable part of human nature. What students who are affected by bullying can expect is the commitment of this government to stamp out bullying, to make it a certainty that the victims will get help, that perpetrators will know that it is not acceptable and they'll be confronted in terms of where it takes place.

I also want to speak to the rest of us. Whether it's the students who are standing by in school or the rest of us who feel we're not affected, it is, simply put, an attitude that has to change. Six times out of 10, a bystander can intervene and end the bullying within 10 seconds, but too often they don't. In 20% of the cases, there are students aiding the bullying. That is something that we are going to put an end to with effective anti-bullying programs in every single school across the province.

Mr. Brownell: The repercussions of bullying are severe, they are real and they must be addressed. It gives me great pride to be part of a government that is doing so in a manner that is both effective and sensitive to the concerns of the youth involved. No matter how many programs we create, however, the opportunities for

bullying persist. With the Internet, phones and time spent away from school, it is unfortunately true that, even if curbed, forms of bullying will continue. As such, it is vital to provide assistance and support to those youth who are victimized by bullying and to let them know that they are not alone.

Minister, could you tell us what actions this government is taking to ensure that victimized youth have access to the support services they need?

1500

Hon. Mr. Kennedy: I want to first say that there's a tremendous amount of effort being made by principals, by school staff and by certain community agencies to try and bring help. What we're trying to do is make sure that that is there for every student who is victimized.

For example, we have a program at Kids Help Phone that will make telephone and e-mail counselling available to every single student who is affected, so that no longer will they be in isolation, because that is the second victimization, where people feel afraid to report to their parents and to others whom we really would appreciate they would trust. But under certain circumstances, if we could turn our minds to it, I think we can understand it doesn't happen. This counselling service will help them to do that. We also will train safe school action teams, including other students, but with teachers and principals in every school across the province.

And this will not happen overnight. This is the beginning, the start of a very concerted effort to change the attitude, so that the very idea that somehow you have to feel bad for having this perpetuated against you will end. I invite—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

GRIDLOCK

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Premier. Premier, I was both surprised and disappointed when I heard last Thursday that you attended a Liberal fundraiser in Hamilton. Now, there's nothing unusual about a Liberal fundraiser in Hamilton. What is unusual is that you went there by plane. You flew from Toronto to Hamilton, a distance of less than 70 kilometres.

There are tens of thousands of people, including myself, who commute each day to work and deal with gridlock. They don't have the luxury of flying to where their next meeting is, or, in your case, where their next dinner party is. You may be thinking it's OK to catch a jet to Hamilton, but clearly the evidence is that you just don't get it.

Premier, are you willing to get your head out of the clouds and work toward gridlock solutions that ordinary Canadians and Ontarians can understand? I call on you to recount and to show leadership on—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The question has been asked. Premier?

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

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): Let me first correct the member. The plane was chartered by the Liberal Party and paid for by the Liberal Party.

Let me address the most important question, which is the congestion. I know the member was at a press conference this morning with the Toronto Board of Trade and the other area board of trade members. We do realize that we need to address the issue of congestion. Our government is absolutely committed to doing that. We made that very clear in our budget; we made that very clear in our throne speech. We know that we need to come up with a seamless, integrated travel system in this province, and we are going to move ahead with that.

Mr. O'Toole: My supplementary is also to the Premier. The idea that you flipped the response to the Minister of Transportation clearly demonstrates that you don't get the seriousness of this issue, and indeed the lack of leadership on this issue. The issue here is the issue of gridlock. You're trying to trivialize this by saying that there's one rule for the Premier and another rule for the peons of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I need to be able to hear the member for Durham. This is entertaining, but not very useful.

The member for Durham.

Mr. O'Toole: Under this government, we have sky-high taxes, we have sky-high energy costs, and now we have sky-high solutions to gridlock, especially when you consider the economics and the importance of gridlock to the economy of Ontario. I can tell you that this morning there was a press conference held by the Toronto Board of Trade, and it was attended by all of the GTA chambers of commerce and boards of trade. They were all calling on your government to have a solution to the problem of gridlock. Premier, are you listening to the issue here? And your shenanigans using the airplane to get to Hamilton, Premier—

The Speaker: The question has been asked.

Hon. Mr. Takhar: Let's just look at the track record first. In this morning's press conference, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce representative said this: "We have been asking governments for five to six years to address the problem of gridlock." We have been in power for only two years, so for four years they have been asking the other government to do something about it and they didn't do anything about it.

Let me tell you what we did. We are making a record investment of \$900 million in transit and \$1.2 billion in our highways. We are moving ahead with our fare card structure. Those are the right steps to take to address some of the congestion problems in this province. I also want to assure the member that we will move ahead with the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority as well.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): My question is to the health minister. The Coalition of Ontario Physicians

in Emergency is filing a formal complaint with Ontario's Ombudsman regarding the failure of your government to provide timely access to emergency care. They'll use four recent examples: where two patients died, one after going home without being seen, the other while waiting for a surgery bed in a teaching hospital; two others who suffered heart attacks and survived, one now on life support, and the other who suffered much greater damage as a result of the wait.

Minister, the coalition says that these patients suffered needlessly and even died because the wait in emergency was too long. Where is your plan to ensure timely access to care in emergency?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I did note those stories, of course. I think it's important in our province, where we have things like coroners who are in the position to help to determine the effects of these things, that those conclusions be the ones that we rely upon. Obviously, a long-standing problem that we've had in the province of Ontario, going back over decades, really, has been the challenge of being able, at all times, to meet our own expectations in terms of timely care in hospital emergency rooms. Previous governments have poured hundreds of millions of dollars directly into that solution and it did not go away.

Accordingly, I think the answer is to be found in a comprehensive range of activities. We've undertaken the most significant one, which is to address the flow of people to hospital emergency rooms in the very first place, so as to leave our acute care hospitals in a situation where their burden, if you will, is limited to the provision of care for those who can only receive care in an acute care environment. Our unprecedented level of investment in community care is the most significant of these things, and by way of supplementary, I'll look forward to the opportunity to expand upon those initiatives we've undertaken.

Ms. Martel: It's clear, Minister, that neither patients nor doctors are seeing improvements as a result of whatever you've done. Let me quote Dr. Brockway, a spokesman for the coalition, who said the following to the media: "These visible tragedies are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to showing how we are failing in our mandate to provide the emergency care Ontarians deserve." That's what he said about four recent complaints that are now going to be filed with the Ombudsman.

There are 5.2 million Ontarians who access hospital emergency departments every year, but your wait-time strategy doesn't focus on the chaos in emergency at all. Many people who come to emergency are seriously ill, and they need timely care. The four cases the coalition plans to raise are proof of that. Minister, patients and doctors have seen no changes in timely care in emergency. When will this become a priority for your government?

Hon. George Smitherman: A couple of points are very, very important here. Firstly, the honourable mem-

ber, as she's wont to do, has leapt to the conclusion that words offered are a pronouncement that must be accepted with blind faith. All I would say to the honourable member is I don't believe that there's an investigation of the circumstances related to those individual cases that warrants the conclusion that has been drawn and advanced by her.

Secondly, I'm not sure if I'm right on this, because I'm going from memory, but I believe Dr. Brockway may be a physician at Credit Valley Hospital. Credit Valley Hospital is an example of a hospital where, notwithstanding the tremendous growth going on in the neighbourhood, the emergency room visits have stagnated, which is unprecedented in an area of growth. This reflects, I believe, some progress on the investments that we've been making at the community level, to provide care to people in environments other than hospital rooms.

The third point is this: Orphan patients in Ontario have done the DNA test, and they have found that the roots of that look an awful lot like that party and that party.

1510

PRIMARY HEALTH CARE

Ms. Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): My question is for the Minister of Health. I read in the paper on the weekend about a report from the Ontario Medical Association. It raised a problem that we know well; that is, the issue of the doctor shortage in Ontario. I was surprised at this report because I know our government has been very proactive and has taken many steps to reverse the trend we saw develop under the two previous governments. As just one recent example, last Thursday our government announced that we're expanding the number of family medicine training positions by 70%. One of the recipients of our government's investment is Western's Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry in my riding of London North Centre. It will receive \$1 million in capital funding to expand those spots for family doctors.

Minister, can you tell me more about the effect of this increase on my constituents and across the province?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The first thing that needs to be said is the most essential point, which is that we're in a situation in our province where in two years as a government we've been able to create enough interest again in comprehensive family practice that there's more demand on family residency spots. Accordingly, our government is moving forward an increase by next year of 141 new family residency spots. That means an additional 337 family physicians in our province by 2008, a 70% increase. That's good news for communities all around our province.

At Western, 25 new positions will be created by 2006, which means that by 2008 we will have created 63 more family doctors ready to serve Ontario patients. The important part for Western and for all the other medical schools that are participating is that we know that

wherever doctors are given the opportunity to study and do clinical placement, they're much more likely to serve there. Accordingly, our distributed method is very likely good news for communities all across Ontario and most particularly, in this case, London.

Ms. Matthews: This kind of tangible commitment to family medicine is long-awaited news. I know this will have an effect on the supply of doctors for my constituents and across the province.

I know that our government is moving forward with urgency to increase access to primary care. It's widely recognized that the NDP created the problem when they reduced medical school spaces in 1993, and the Tory government sat on their hands for five years before they did anything about it. I know the Tory government made lots of promises about increasing access, but they were just promises. They didn't deliver on them.

I'd like you, please, to outline for me our government's plan to increase primary care access for those who have gone without this care for far too long.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: One thing that's very important—

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: If I could just ask you two to hold off for a second. Thanks.

One thing that I think is important—

Interjection

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Sandra, please. That's something I might do.

I think it's important to note that one of the architects of that report, Dr. Josh Tepper, is now the assistant deputy minister of health human resources in our ministry. He will bring additional strategy and energy to initiatives that are already undertaken: increasing undergraduate spaces by 15%, more than doubling the opportunities for international medical graduates, a new deal with the Ontario Medical Association that puts a lot of money into important areas related to family practice, 69 new family health teams coming to life in Ontario, 39 new community health centres and satellites, in addition to the \$21-million investment and 10 satellites last year.

The point is that all these things taken together are good news for patients in Ontario, who, as orphans, know two daddies, and accordingly will begin to see the McGuinty government—

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

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. As you're well aware, the General Motors plants in Oshawa are second to none. Whether it's productivity or quality, J. D. Power and Associates listed Oshawa as number one in North America and the world. I know you know that, Minister, because you were there. One of the key problems, aside from operational costs, whether it's electricity or costs to transport goods, is equal market share access.

Minister, you just returned from a foreign trade mission. What are you doing in Ontario to protect Ontario's goods? They're not allowed to be sold in other countries, yet those countries are allowed to sell their goods in our country.

Hon. Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): I want to thank the member for his praise of the GM deal when it was announced. I think he would still agree with me that this was a very important investment made on the part of GM in Ontario.

I would suggest to the member that the matters he's referring to obviously deal with federal jurisdiction with respect to agreements that are made with other countries. I have recently expressed my concern with respect to a free trade agreement that is being contemplated with South Korea by the federal government, focused on what impacts there might be on the auto sector with regard to free trade agreements. I would say to the member that the federal government is fully apprised of that position.

Mr. Ouellette: Minister, it has to be a little bit more than just expressing your concerns. This is one of the key components in the province of Ontario. Without the auto sector, which is the largest employer, we may face some significant impacts as well. I know very well that you're working very hard. South Korea is one of the key areas. What exactly are you doing besides expressing your concern? Have you had any correspondence? What have you come forward with to protect Ontario's interests and Ontario workers?

Hon. Mr. Cordiano: Again, I would suggest to the member that in my discussions with the federal trade minister, we've had discussions about this. As well, I have corresponded with my counterpart federally to express Ontario's position, laying out fully the fact that we want to make certain that any agreements that are being signed with any other country ensure that we're not adversely affected or impacted when it comes to the auto sector.

CASINO TAXATION

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): My question is to the Acting Premier. You'll know that in 1996 the Harris government, without consultation, imposed a 20% win tax on gross revenues from Casino Rama. This is money that should have rightfully gone to First Nations to assist those communities to do what is necessary to function. We figure that, including the interest, the win tax has stripped away almost \$1 billion and climbing from First Nations as we speak. Your government made a commitment to create a new relationship with First Nations in this province, yet you've maintained the win tax and you're tying up First Nations in a process that will end up pushing them into court. I'm asking you today in this House, will you do the right thing and return the money that rightfully belongs to First Nations that has been stripped away by the win tax to First Nations, which need the money?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): To the Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): In my role as minister for aboriginal affairs, I would like to say to the member, as the member knows, that this government six months ago appointed former Premier David Peterson to be a negotiator in this particular area. As you know, it's a very contentious area and we thought he would have the experience in this. He's been working on this with the First Nations communities and organizations that are involved in this and he's making very good progress.

Mr. Bisson: I'm not sure what's contentious. What's contentious is that money has been taken away from First Nations and they could have used that money to do things in their communities that are necessary. Communities like Marten Falls, Pikangikum and others that need services in their communities are not able to do so because they don't have the money. So I don't know what's contentious.

You can do the right thing. You can say today in this House that you're prepared to say to First Nations across this province that you'll return almost \$1 billion plus court costs to First Nations so they can do what's right. I ask you the question: Will you drop this and will you give the money that's rightfully owed to the First Nations directly?

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: We have perfect confidence that former Premier David Peterson is the right person to carry out these discussions and negotiations with Ontario First Nations when it comes to these revenues, and we expect a report from him shortly.

1520

ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION

Mr. Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): My question is for the Minister of Culture. At the beginning of the month, seven remarkable Ontario not-for-profit organizations, one of which was in my community of Thunder Bay, were honoured for the difference they've made in their communities thanks to the grants they received from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. What can you tell us about the awards that were presented at the Great Grants Awards 2005?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur (Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs): The Ontario Trillium Foundation receives annually \$100 million of government funding, generated through Ontario's charity casino initiative.

The Ontario Trillium Foundation Great Grants Awards recognize the true leadership of community organizations. The grants remove barriers to employment and education, help Ontarians to be healthy, and improve the prospects of Ontarians of all backgrounds. The results of these grants greatly exceed our government's financial investment. These organizations contribute to our quality of life.

Four awards were presented to grantees in the foundation community program who demonstrated significant impact in four funding sectors. To be considered for any of these awards, eligibility was limited to foundation grant recipients who have completed at least one full year of their grant and whose grant was approved in or after 2002. All of the nominated grants demonstrate—

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

Mr. Mauro: Thank you, Minister. One of the integral components of the grant process, as we all know, are the grant review teams that exist in all of our communities. One of the people in Thunder Bay I'd like to acknowledge is Lorne Allard. Lorne is a long-standing community volunteer, a former city councillor I had the privilege of serving with on city council, and now a member of the grant review team there. These people do tremendous work on a voluntary basis.

I'm also pleased to repeat that the winner in the sports and recreation category is Thunder Bay's Lakehead Canoe Club. Please tell us what distinguished the Lakehead Canoe Club from the other finalists.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I wanted to congratulate this organization. Dragon boat racing is one of the fastest-growing water sports in the world today. Since acquiring four dragon boats in January 2004, Thunder Bay's Lakehead Canoe Club has seen a dramatic increase in participation from local and regional youth and adults. The dragon boat races attracted an impressive 3,300 regional paddlers, and they were cheered on by more than 27,000 spectators. The club makes its dragon boats available to other communities in an effort to build a strong northwestern Ontario competitive force at the national level.

In 2003, the club received \$75,000 over one year from the Ontario Trillium Foundation to purchase the necessary equipment for racing and to enhance fundraising. So I wanted to congratulate the—

The Speaker: Thank you.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): I have a question for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. In your first budget about a year and a half ago, you brought in the largest tax increase in Ontario's history. You must know that you cannot do that without serious economic repercussions down the road.

Tax policy and implementation have lag times of a year and a half to two years. Mr. Minister, that time has arrived and you are now seeing the harvest of the tax increases your government sowed. Ontario manufacturers need relief from your tax increases if they are to survive. Will you provide Ontario manufacturers with the relief they so desperately need?

Hon. Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): Let me remind the member that since this government has been in office, the Ontario economy has created 214,000 net new jobs. The unem-

ployment rate was at 6.4% in October. That's the lowest rate since 2001 and below the national average of 6.6%.

Let me just say about our manufacturers that in fact they have been facing certain challenges with respect to the economic situation. A lot of what they're facing is a higher dollar that has resulted in exports becoming more expensive when they're shipped, for example, to our largest trading partner, the United States.

What is impressive about what has happened is that our manufacturers have increased their productivity rates by 5.1%. Under your government, the productivity rate—

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

Mr. Chudleigh: We were talking about the lag time here, Minister, and that creates those kinds of economic problems, something that your government is doing nothing about.

I've just sent you a list of some 8,000 jobs: plants from Thunder Bay to Cornwall, Prescott, Windsor, Burlington, Elmira; plants all over Ontario that are closing or laying off jobs for the first time in their history, such as Sleeman Breweries. They've never had a layoff before, but they're laying them off now.

Minister, the manufacturing sector, the sector in this province that creates long-time jobs, that creates jobs in the service sector, has lost 42,000 jobs in the last year. Your sector, economic development and trade, is in serious trouble. What are you going to do? What plan do you have to create an opportunity for these companies to survive? What are you going to do? Can you blame the Conservative government for that? Can you blame the feds for that? Can you blame the Americans for that? Can you blame the exchange rate for that? Who are you going to blame? And while you're blaming those people, these companies are going out of business.

Hon. Mr. Cordiano: We have no reason to apologize for these bright economic numbers: 214,000 net new jobs created by the Ontario economy. In fact, Canadian manufacturing productivity increased by 5.2%, just to correct myself. Shipments in 2004 totalled \$310 billion, up 54% from 1995—dramatic increases. Ontario's manufacturing employment is second overall in North America, behind only California.

Yes, the manufacturing sector has experienced some challenges, but they're working through those challenges, as evidenced by the fact that there is an increase in investment in machinery and equipment by about 9.1% this year, which means that our manufacturing sector is becoming more productive. That will lead to more exports and that will lead eventually to a greater number of jobs, even in the manufacturing sector.

VISITOR

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: In the east members' gallery we have the Portuguese consul to Toronto, the newly arrived Dr. Maria Paiva.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Welcome. That, of course, is not a point of order.

PETITIONS

1530

SERVICES FOR THE
DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario signed by a great number of my constituents.

“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 as I agree with the petition.

PROSTATE CANCER

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas Bill Mauro, MPP for Thunder Bay–Atikokan, introduced a private member’s bill, Bill 4, that amends the Health Insurance Act and seeks to make the prostate specific antigen (PSA) test an insured service under OHIP; and

“Whereas the PSA test is one of the means used to screen for possible prostate cancer, the most commonly diagnosed cancer in Canadian men;

“Whereas the PSA test is used as an indicator of the likelihood a man has prostate cancer and can be very helpful in guiding men in deciding whether to continue with further testing; and

“Whereas PSA testing in Ontario is only covered if recommended by a doctor and done in a hospital setting, otherwise costing Ontario men approximately \$25, a fee which could be a deterrent to the underprivileged;

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

“To support Bill Mauro’s private member’s bill, Bill 4, which makes PSA testing an insured service under the Ontario health insurance plan.”

I agree with this petition, affix my signature to it and give it to page Andrew.

CORMORANTS

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

I affix my signature in support.

GAMMA FOUNDRIES

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I would like the Minister of the Environment to take particular note of this petition to the Parliament of Ontario. It’s presented by Geoffrey and Dorothy Long of Cascade Circle in Richmond Hill and is signed by hundreds of their neighbours. It reads as follows:

“Whereas all residents in the town of Richmond Hill have the right to enjoy their homes, property, neighbourhood and to breathe clean air; and

“Whereas Gamma Foundries, a division of Victaulic Co. of Canada Ltd., is clearly the identifiable and documented source of noxious fumes and odours in the Newkirk Road area of Richmond Hill; and

“Whereas Gamma Foundries has persistently failed to respond to the legitimate concerns of the community regarding these odours and emissions; and

“Whereas Gamma Foundries has refused to initiate engineering solutions to these issues as identified in a report by Earth Tech and as ordered by the Ministry of the Environment; and

“Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has specifically directed Gamma Foundries to initiate engineered controls to address the adverse effects of these pollutants;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario and the Minister of the Environment to take all measures possible to enforce the provincial officer’s order ... and to ensure that residents are afforded the right to enjoy their property and neighbourhood as is their right under law.”

I affix my signature to this petition.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Jim Flaherty (Whitby–Ajax): I have a petition with respect to persons with intellectual disabilities and those who work with them in the province 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 have signed it as well.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): 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’m pleased to sign this and present it to Nathan to present to the table.

CELL PHONES

Mr. John O’Toole (Durham): I’m pleased to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which reads as follows:

“Whereas the safe operation of a motor vehicle requires the driver’s undivided attention; and

“Whereas research has shown that the operation of devices such as cell phones detracts from a driver’s ability to respond and concentrate on the task at hand; and

“Whereas approximately 40 jurisdictions around the world have already passed legislation to restrict the use of cell phones while driving;

“Therefore, we, the undersigned”—a very long list here as well—“respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario ... that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario enact legislation to curtail the use of” cell phones “as proposed in the private member’s legislation introduced by” MPP “John O’Toole....”

I’m pleased to support this legislation as a good piece, and I think members will all support it.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

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

“Whereas the Minister of Culture recently announced that there would be funding cuts totalling more than \$1.2 million from Ontario public library services; and

“Whereas over 69 million people visited public libraries in Ontario in 2003, with more than 100 million items circulating; and

“Whereas these cuts will impact you as a library user, resulting in delays in how often your library receives new books;

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

“That the Minister of Culture restore the cuts to funding for Ontario public library services so that our library can continue to promote literacy in our community.”

I signed that petition, and I want to thank the Collingwood Public Library for sending it to me.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): “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.”

As I am in agreement, I will sign this petition.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition 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” others; “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 name in support.

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

“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’ve affixed my signature as well.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I have a petition that was presented to me by Mr. Don Wilkinson of Community Living York South. It contains some 184 signatures. It reads as follows:

“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’m pleased to affix my signature in support of this request.

1540

STUDENT SAFETY

Mr. Jim Flaherty (Whitby–Ajax): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly.

“Whereas the Ministry of Education has failed to ensure that students are protected from individuals whose past behaviours have directly harmed children; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Education has chosen to ignore the children’s aid society’s recommendation that certain individuals not work with children; and

“Whereas the introduction of a ‘volunteer’ into the school system must not be solely at the discretion of the principal; and

“Whereas the Liberal government promised to ensure that school boards provide strong local accountability and decision-making;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to amend the Education Act to place restrictions on the eligibility of persons who act as volunteers in schools, and to include as a formal requirement that volunteers be subject to the approval of the school board and parent council.”

I’ve signed the petition.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O’Toole (Durham): Thank you very much—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Excuse me. The Chair changes its mind. The member for Oxford.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): The petition I have here, signed by a great number of my constituents, is similar to others that have been read, and obviously that’s because it’s such a great concern for the people in my community. The petition is 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, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The time for petitions has expired.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

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

The Deputy Clerk (Ms. Deborah Deller): The following is the title of the bill to which His Honour did assent:

Bill 169, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and to amend and repeal various other statutes in respect of transportation-related matters / Projet de loi 169, Loi modifiant le Code de la route et modifiant et abrogeant diverses autres lois à l'égard de questions relatives au transport.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET MEASURES ACT, 2005 LOI DE 2005 SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 14, 2005, on the motion for second reading of Bill 197, An Act to implement Budget measures / Projet de loi 197, Loi mettant en oeuvre certaines mesures budgétaires.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 17, 2005, I'm now required to put the question.

On October 25, 2005, Mr. Duncan moved second reading of Bill 197, An Act to implement Budget measures. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say “aye.”

All those opposed, say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We'll call in the members. I remind them that this is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1544 to 1549.

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

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bountroggianni, Marie

Gerretsen, John
Hoy, Pat
Jeffrey, Linda
Kennedy, Gerard
Kular, Kuldirp

Parsons, Ernie
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra
Qaadri, Shafiq

Bradley, James J.
Brownell, Jim
Bryant, Michael
Cansfield, Donna H.
Caplan, David
Chambers, Mary Anne V.
Colle, Mike
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Di Cocco, Caroline
Duguid, Brad
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fonseca, Peter

Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Marsales, Judy
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol
Mossop, Jennifer F.

Racco, Mario G.
Ramal, Khalil
Ramsay, David
Rinaldi, Lou
Smith, Monique
Smitherman, George
Sorbara, Gregory S.
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Watson, Jim
Wilkinson, John
Wong, Tony C.
Zimmer, David

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Bisson, Gilles
Chudleigh, Ted
Dunlop, Garfield
Flaherty, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie
Horwath, Andrea

Hudak, Tim
Jackson, Cameron
Klees, Frank
Kormos, Peter
Marchese, Rosario
Martel, Shelley
Miller, Norm

Munro, Julia
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Prue, Michael
Runciman, Robert W.
Sterling, Norman W.
Wilson, Jim

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 54; the nays are 21.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

BUDGET MEASURES ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005

SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES

Mr. Bradley moved third 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 Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Bradley.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Speaker, I'll be sharing my time with the member from Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge, who will now commence the debate.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge): I'm pleased to rise today on third reading of Bill 197, the Budget Measures Act. The budget bill covers a wide array of topics, introduced by the minister.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Can we clear the Legislature of those who want to carry on meetings so that the member can proceed?

Mr. Arthurs: Thank you, Speaker.

Bill 197 contains a wide array of topic areas of interest to constituents of the province of Ontario. It contains amendments to some 11 different statutes and proposes changes in three others.

There are those who support investment and innovation as part of the overall strategy of the budget bill. We're proposing changes to make this sector even more attractive to investors. One type of investor is those who have put money into labour-sponsored investment funds,

also known as LSIFs. In this bill, we're proposing amendments that would give legislative effect to our plan to phase out the tax credit for these funds by the end of the 2010 taxation year.

When these provincial tax credits were introduced in 1991, the province's venture capital sector was at a much different stage than it is today. Our government has put in place a number of programs to help build and sustain the sector, and thus it was felt appropriate that by 2010, the LSIF tax credits be phased out.

We expect that we will help to build this sector and sustain it in a variety of ways, including:

—The establishment of a new Ministry of Research and Innovation, led by Premier McGuinty. It includes these types of initiatives that will keep the sector strong.

—A new Research Council of Ontario, to help coordinate public research and commercialization opportunities. Certainly, the Minister of Economic Development and Trade has spoken, during this mandate over two years, about strategies on commercialization to bring new ideas to fruition and actually put them in the marketplace.

—As well as promoting Ontario as a research centre. There has been a \$27-million investment in the Ontario research commercialization program proposed in the bill to help public research institutions attract early investment, and a \$36-million Ontario commercialization investment fund to help encourage investment in new technology companies.

We've worked closely with the labour-sponsored investment sector, and have developed a plan that will allow the province to exit this particular involvement from this tax credit in an orderly and responsible fashion. It's not being cut off in this budget year, but clearly there's a strategy through to 2010 to allow the sector to adapt to its new realities, and for the overall investment and research sector to take hold of the opportunities that clearly exist.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to turn my attention, and yours, if I could, to the elements of the bill that support the Reaching Higher plan as one of the other initiatives. As members will recall, one year ago the McGuinty government took the bold step of introducing the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act. In doing that, the provisions of this act—although they apply to the government itself, we believe that its spirit can and should apply to other areas of the public sector.

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 transparent and accountable to the people of Ontario. So as not to jeopardize the work being done at these institutions, the freedom of information provisions would take into account and respect academic freedom and competitiveness. Clearly, we understand the importance of the university post-secondary sector when it comes to doing research and innovative study programs. Thus, we wouldn't want to jeopardize that academic freedom, or the competitive environment that is created accordingly.

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 improvement 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 interests, the budget proposes to introduce the Private Career Colleges Act, 2005. This legislation would, among other measures, establish a superintendent to 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 of Ontario.

The McGuinty government's second budget makes some key investments in Ontario's priorities, which certainly includes post-secondary education with a historic commitment to \$6.2 billion by 2009-10. This is the largest multi-year investment in over 40 years and a strategic long-term investment in jobs and economic growth in Ontario.

1600

I would like to take the opportunity to address some of the good government measures that the bill has planned. One thing the bill would do is authorize the borrowing of up to \$7.1 billion. This money would be invested in the government's programs, the government's services and other related costs the government finds itself having to deal with. No one, though, should interpret this borrowing provision as anything other than the routine business of the government of the province of Ontario. The fiscal plan, as set out, is on track. We've made great strides and had great success in reducing the deficit we inherited from the Harris-Eves government. Minister Duncan spoke to the plan just a few weeks ago. If I can just draw from his remarks, and I quote, "Ontario's economic foundations are firm and the outlook is positive. Ontario is well positioned to manage the challenges and opportunities ahead, due to its economic diversity and growing, highly educated population." We continue to manage our revenues and expenditures in what can only be referred to as a fiscally responsible manner.

Higher revenues have helped us, with the projection of our deficit being reduced to some \$2.4 billion, an improvement of some \$427 million from the 2005 budget projections this spring. If the \$1-billion reserve that's built into the plan to protect against unexpected and adverse changes to the economic and fiscal outlook is not required, the deficit could further be reduced to some \$1.4 billion. Clearly that would be good news for the people of the province of Ontario, if we're able to achieve that in this fiscal year 2005-06.

The bill also proposes a streamlining of tax remission procedures. Current legislation allows the minister to recommend to the Lieutenant Governor the remission of any tax, fee or penalty when the minister sees it as being in the public interest to do so. Under our proposed changes, the minister himself or herself, as the case might

be at whatever point in time those occur, would have the authority to approve such a remission of \$10,000 or less.

As the minister and other members of the government, including the Premier, have said on many occasions, our plan is working. As a matter of fact, I found it very interesting when the minister spoke a week or so ago in a rather animated fashion. He spoke about what should be up—things like jobs and revenues are up—and he said what should be down, such as the deficit, which clearly is down.

Since we came into office a little more than two years ago, we have seen thousands, tens of thousands, literally hundreds of thousands, of new jobs created. As a matter of fact, the Minister of Economic Development and Trade this afternoon spoke to the fact that there have been some 214,000 net new jobs added to the economy of the province since we took office. We've seen major companies, such as Toyota, commit significant additional investment into the province of Ontario. The deficit, which stood at some \$5.5 billion in 2003-04, currently stands at \$1.6 billion.

The future is not without risk; that's for sure. I believe the budget—and this particular piece of legislation—does an admirable job of managing those risks and those challenges and preparing Ontario for the success that awaits us all.

I'm certainly proud of the steps our government has taken. I'm pleased and proud in being able to work directly with Minister Duncan and the Ministry of Finance. I'm pleased that, both in this bill and across the board, we're getting help to achieve the success that is so much needed.

There are a number of measures, and I don't want to deal with them all, but I do want to make a few additional comments. I've already mentioned that if the \$1-billion reserve is not required that's been built into the plan, if we don't need it for those unexpected and adverse changes to the economy, the 2005 deficit could possibly be further reduced to some \$1.4 billion. Our very balanced and responsible approach that will eliminate the deficit by no later than 2008 or 2009, or possibly a year earlier if those reserves are not needed, and we remain on track.

Job growth continues, with over 200,000 new jobs introduced into the economy.

But what about the challenges and risks that we find ourselves facing yet? We're optimistic about the future, but it's important to remember that we do have challenges. Certainly high oil prices are an example. We've seen the impact of hurricanes in the Gulf, what they did in the short term. High oil prices are going to continue to challenge us. Speculation that we'll see higher interest rates—we can see the bank rates beginning to move up—will put pressure on our economy. But we're positioned to deal with those, and certainly through the budgetary planning are acknowledging those realities, things like higher oil prices, the strength of the Canadian dollar and, potentially, the higher interest rates.

We plan on continuing to strengthen the economy. We're going to continue to call on the federal govern-

ment to join us in doing that, to join us in a critical partnership to ensure that Ontario remains the engine of economic growth in Canada, as it has been, and to help us narrow the \$23-billion gap between what we are spending on federal programs and what we are receiving back here in Ontario. All parties have supported the government in helping to narrow that gap to a more responsible level, at the same time as recognizing our obligation as the engine of the economy of Canada in ensuring that those who have the greatest need are protected.

We're committed to enhance and strengthen the level of confidence in Ontario's economy here at home, across the continent and, frankly, around the world. Thanks to the Premier, we're working on the gap. More recently, the Premier and a contingent spent some 10 or 11 days in China and I think made a very strong impression. Certainly the local media we saw as a result of that tour encouraged us that we are doing the right things in reaching out to what is one of the largest trading partners in the world and will be one of the largest economic engines that the world has ever seen in the years to come. We need to establish and build relationships with China on an economic front. This is the first foray, as I understand, from our Premier, and the first one in a long time to China. There will be a requirement to do more of those. One has to build those relationships and continue those relationships to have success in doing business in China. It can't be a one-off venture.

One of the issues that we faced recently was higher gas prices. It's something that we need to come back to on occasion so that the public at large recognizes that as gas prices go up, provincial revenues don't go up accordingly. So there is no windfall for us as a result of an increase in gas prices. In fact, what we see often is a decline in usage as prices go up, and, with that decline in usage, a decline in our revenue stream, because our revenues are based on a per-litre sale, not on the value of the commodity. So challenges such as higher gas prices are truly reflected in the revenue stream that we see available to us.

There are a number of initiatives that this budget bill proposes, a number that I've had a chance to mention. We are on track for our economic projections; we're on track for a balanced budget; we're looking at the investment community through things like the labour-sponsored investment fund; we recognize the importance of health; we recognize the importance of post-secondary education in particular through the proposed investments over five years to ensure that we are well positioned for the future in Ontario.

We're not prepared, through this budget or any budget, to try to be all things to all people. I know that the Leader of the Opposition would like us to take \$2.4 billion out of the health care system. He would like us to lower taxes and he would like us to spend more money. Frankly, that's not a possibility. Probably every member of this Legislature would like us to spend more money, have less taxes and be able to get rid of the deficit yesterday, but that's not a political reality for anyone in

this Legislature, so we have to make difficult and hard decisions about how we're going to achieve the end results that we want. This budget helps us to do that in a responsible fashion.

The Tory government that preceded us managed, in spite of telling us they had a balanced budget, to run up effectively a huge deficit, and they did that at a time when revenues were declining. We're not prepared to do that. We're prepared, though, to let people know that we are getting to a real balanced budget. When we get that deficit eliminated, the Auditor General will report on that accordingly and report before the next election on the success we've had in doing that. People will know exactly where they stand in that regard.

I'm looking forward to the conclusion of the debate. If this legislation is passed, allowing us to move on with the complete and full implementation of the Budget Measures Act as proposed under Bill 197, I look forward to our continuing work on behalf of the people of the province of Ontario in a responsible fashion economically, and to building the economy of the province and providing for the key needs of the province both from the standpoint of its health and its education for our generation and the generation that will follow us.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for your time and the attention of the Legislature.

1610

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I listened very intently to the honourable member's defence of this recent budget and I really want to say, having just concluded the estimates—which is, for those who are uninitiated, the annual review of the budgetary process ministry by ministry by ministry. So when you get past the veneer of the government public relations gesture of putting out a budget with its top-line messages as to how they interpret they're going to be improving the economy, below that surface are the really painful details of where the government is cutting in programs and shifting dollars.

It's been well documented, the significant amount of increase the government is putting into advertising at a time when our children's aid societies are carrying over a \$75-million deficit from last year. They're projected to do a further \$60-million to \$70-million accumulated deficit. Children's support services like Erinoak—I had a meeting with them earlier this morning—have in some of their language development programs a 100% increase and yet their budgets have been flatlined by this Liberal government. It's bad enough that they eliminated a very capable minister of children's services and then proceeded to freeze program after program that was in this very promising envelope of responsibility for the government. The list of program cuts is quite enormous, primarily in children's services. If you're not in the educational system and the money is not going to teachers, it's very hard to find where this government is putting money directly into the hands of children and their learning experiences.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments. The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I hope you can hear me with this horrendous sore throat and cold I have.

I was listening intently to the member for Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge as he rhymed off what he thinks are the important government goals and objectives. Then he came to the sentence that rather puzzles me. He said that all members of this House would like to increase spending, all members of this House would like to reduce taxes and all members of this House would at the same time like to pay down the deficit, but it is simply not possible. It seems self-evident to me that that is not possible. But I have to ask the honourable member, during the last election, is that not exactly what your party promised to do? That is precisely what they promised to do and what they have not delivered in this budget.

You promised that you were going to increase spending in 231 policy areas; you promised that you were going to not raise taxes, if not reduce them; and you promised that you were going to do wonders with the deficit. The reality is that none of those things were possible.

It is refreshing today to hear the member comment that all people want to do it but it's not possible, but I wonder if he would maybe in his own two minutes at the end describe how and when he came to this revelation. It certainly wasn't at the time of the last election; it certainly wasn't at the time of the first budget; but it seems now to have sunk in, in very real terms to him.

I would state that he is talking about a number of areas and policy initiatives that he thinks the government is doing well in, and I hope, when it is my turn to speak, that I can talk to him about some areas where you are not doing so well—areas involving the poor, those on welfare, areas of housing and rent supplements, areas of aboriginal communities and those children who are afflicted with autism. That's really what this debate should be.

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London–Fanshawe): Thank you for giving me this opportunity again to stand up and speak about the budget.

I was listening carefully to the member for Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge when he was talking about and detailing the importance of the budget. I also listened to the members for Burlington and Beaches–East York. I want to say, our budget has a lot of great elements. It draws a vision for the future of this province.

When you go to many different communities—when we go to London, they are really enjoying the government investment in health care, education, colleges and universities, child care spaces, senior citizens' homes, affordable housing. All these elements came about because the government made this second budget that speaks to all these issues.

To speak to the honourable member from Beaches–East York, when he was talking about some negative issues going on in many different Ontario communities, I

agree with him. Do we say we've solved all the problems? No. We still have a lot of problems in front of us that we have to face. We have to work toward eliminating or at least minimizing their effect and try to solve some of those issues, because they need our intervention as soon as possible. But, as he knows, we inherited a big deficit from the past government. We inherited a lot of problems: the chaotic situation in the education system, in health care, in senior citizens' homes, affordable housing and many different issues.

That's why this budget came to speak about these issues, came to put the whole government on the right track in order to solve all these elements: to work to solve the issues of the poor, of affordable housing; to try to fix health care and the education system; to try to invest more money in post-secondary education. We believe the future is about research, about innovation, about creating jobs for many different young people in our communities.

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): It's my pleasure to add some comments to the speech of the member from Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge. He was talking about debt and the deficit. I would ask, what is the deficit supposed to be this year? The numbers just keep on changing. I've heard \$1.6 billion, \$2.4 billion. I know that, had this government stuck to its original plan, even to the 2004 budget plan, they would have had a surplus this past year. But no, you keep on changing your plans. You keep on making a plan and then changing it—

Interjection: Four times.

Mr. Miller: Four times. That's four new plans you've made in the last couple of years.

The member from Beaches–East York was talking about the election commitments that were made by this government. Just last week I refreshed myself on some of the 231 election promises that were made by the Liberal Party when they were running in the 2003 election. I recall there was a line in there that the debt would go one way, and that's down. I think that's what it said: one way, down. Well, what has happened? The debt has gone up significantly; in fact, we've seen some massive increases in the debt this government has racked up in the last couple of years. They've done that at a time when they had \$13 billion extra revenue that they weren't counting on having, and yet they've still increased the debt to the taxpayers of this province.

That's the same thing that happened back in 1987 to 1990, when the Peterson Liberal government had an opportunity to balance the budget in the province of Ontario but instead had undisciplined spending and never did balance the budget. We have the forestry and automotive sectors and manufacturing losing 42,000 jobs—some real problems starting out there—and this government can't be disciplined and control their spending so that businesses can do well and the people of this province can prosper.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Whitby–Ajax–Uxbridge has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Arthurs: I want to thank the members from Burlington, Beaches–East York, London–Fanshawe and Parry Sound–Muskoka for their comments.

Just a couple of things, and let me start where the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka finished, with comments about the deficit and where we stand. We've had stronger growth and higher revenues in 2005, and the deficit is now projected at \$2.4 billion, as opposed to the \$2.8 billion projected earlier this year. It has helped us at mid-year to get to a better projected position.

If the \$1 billion we have set aside in reserve—built into the plan to protect against unexpected conditions—is not required, the deficit could be further reduced to \$1.4 billion. So we're projecting—best case, with not using the reserve—a year-end deficit of \$1.4 billion. That's on track with where we want to be, certainly on track for 2008-09 to have a balanced budget, and ideally earlier, by 2007-08. Certainly strong economic growth and new jobs will help to do that.

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The member from Beaches–East York: I can appreciate his comments, both having come here from the municipal sector. We all know the realities of balancing demands, financial resources and the ability to pay for those. I guess the real comment is, we can't be everything to everyone—none of us can—at any point in time. We can't, as a government, eliminate the deficit in this budget year, increase spending in things like post-secondary education, and eliminate the entire deficit. It just can't all be done at once. We've had to make choices about priorities. Our priorities are in health, in education, in post-secondary education, which are high on our agenda, and it's going to take us a little bit longer, then, to be able to eliminate the deficit that we inherited in its entirety.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the time, and the interjections from the members opposite.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): I am going to split my one-hour lead with my colleagues from Simcoe–Grey and from Lanark–Carleton.

I'm pleased to arise on third reading of Bill 197. I had a chance to address the bill in its totality on second reading. We did not have committee hearings on this. The bill is the same as it was at second reading, so I won't dwell on a number of the details; my remarks will continue to stand.

There are some areas that I did want to highlight over probably about a 10-minute or so address on Bill 197 at third reading. First, I think it's always important, when we're speaking about a finance bill, to look at the overall context of the financial plan. It's really hard to say "financial plan," because in fact there have been a series of varying financial plans brought forward by the McGuinty government. Minister Sorbara, I think, had three or four separate plans where the numbers continued to change dramatically. Now the new finance minister from Windsor, Mr. Duncan, has brought forward his own mark.

I do want to state for the record what is rather surprising about Minister Duncan's debut as finance minister: He has increased the deficit from what was reported at \$1.6 billion last year to \$2.4 billion, if I recall off the top of my head, for the fiscal year 2005-06. This has to be the first finance minister in a long, long time who has taken over the books midway through a term and actually increased the deficit in his first budget. That's regrettable, because there really should be no reason for the deficit to increase under Finance Minister Duncan. I think we all know that revenues are up exorbitantly in the provincial of Ontario, what with Dalton McGuinty's record tax increases on working families and on businesses both small and large; as well, more money that they're clawing in through increased user fees and through hydro rate increases, to name but a couple. It is rather strange and disturbing to see the actual deficit numbers increasing, when some \$13 billion in additional revenue has come into the coffers through Dalton McGuinty's taxing initiatives.

His high-tax policy, though, is met with a higher spending policy. In fact, Dalton McGuinty's tax-and-spend proclivities make Bob Rae and David Peterson blush. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation put out a study recently that indicated Dalton McGuinty's per capita spending has already exceeded those of Bob Rae and David Peterson, former poster children of runaway spending. Of course, those are measured in constant dollars. So the \$13 billion in additional revenues squeezed from hardworking taxpayers and from businesses has been spent, and then some, meaning the deficit continues, and in fact is increasing, in 2005-06.

I've mentioned there has been a series of financial plans by this government that seem to have the shelf life of maybe a piece of fruit. They pretty quickly go out of use. If you look back at Minister Sorbara's 2004-05 budget, you will see there very clearly spending projections for 2005-06. If you take into account the revenue that they're actually receiving this year, the McGuinty government should be in a surplus. I think it was about \$1.6 billion. I'll have to check my notes from my second reading remarks, but there should actually be a surplus, if they had stuck to plan. If they had kept spending at what they had projected, which is a significant, rapid rate of increase in many areas, if they had stuck to their spending projections, they would actually be in a surplus position today. That would give them room to give a break to hard-pressed taxpayers across the province of Ontario who are now paying some \$2,000-plus more in taxes, fees and gas prices than they did before Dalton McGuinty became Premier of the province.

Similarly, some assistance could be given to helping businesses compete by reducing corporate tax rates. That would also be an option that this government would have at hand. We heard today very disturbing news about some 3,000 positions being lost at General Motors throughout our province. Of course, I'm very concerned about the loss of jobs at the St. Catharines plant, as it has such a big impact, not only on those individual families

but on the economy in the Niagara Peninsula as a whole. My colleague from Oshawa is extremely disconcerted about the tremendous loss of jobs at the Oshawa facility and the impact that's going to have on working families and businesses in the Oshawa area.

You would think that when the Dalton McGuinty government dished out—what was it?—some \$600 million to \$700 million to General Motors, they would have put better protections in there to ensure that they didn't take the money on one hand and then lay off thousands of people in Oshawa and St. Catharines on the other. Hopefully, we'll have better answers from the Premier at next question period about how he's going to try to remedy the very dire news that we heard today, about the dramatic impact on the individuals and families that work at General Motors, and also on the very disheartening impact on the economy as a whole, particularly in light of the some 42,000 manufacturing jobs that we've already seen flee the province under Premier Dalton McGuinty.

I think it's always important to look at these bills in the context of the overall economy and the overall fiscal plan, or lack thereof, of the McGuinty government. We cannot lose sight of the some \$2,000 each that working families are now out of pocket under this government. Of course, we cannot forget, as my colleague from Parry Sound-Muskoka indicated, the large number of broken promises that have taken place. I remember Dalton McGuinty staring into the TV camera during commercials saying that he would not raise our taxes. One of the first bills he actually brought before this assembly broke that solemn commitment and increased taxes on working families precipitously, as well as on businesses. Dalton McGuinty, as my colleague from Parry Sound-Muskoka indicated, also said that he would balance the budget each and every year. We found that to be a broken promise that keeps breaking. In fact, now they are projecting deficits out to 2008-09.

As I said, if they had stuck to a plan from the beginning, they would clearly show a surplus on the books today. There's no reason for these ongoing deficits except that Dalton McGuinty just can't help himself. He continues to throw money at problems in the province without realizing any benefits or improved services in key areas like health care and education.

As my colleague from Parry Sound-Muskoka indicated, the debt has gone up as well. In fact, I think the result of the increased debt under the McGuinty government is some \$1,000-plus to all working families in the province, when they try to pay down that debt over time.

To get to the bill at hand in a bit more detail, I do want to reiterate the opposition's concern, particularly—I'm going to jump out of order a little bit here. There are some schedules I wanted to speak to, but I'm going to—

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: Maybe you're right. I appreciate my colleague from Brantford saying that. You know what? You're right. Let's stick to the order. Let's not upset the whip or the Speaker. We'll stick to the alphabetical order, if you will, and start with schedule A.

I know that my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka is very interested in this, as am I. It's amendments to the Assessment Act. I remember at caucus—talking about old caucus discussions—that it was an important point to him: protecting managed forest and conservation initiatives in the province of Ontario. This will give the minister the ability, through regulation, to make consequential amendments to other provisions of the Assessment Act. It currently specifies that the current value of conservation land and managed forest land must be based only on the current use of the land. New subsection 19(5.2.1) allows the Minister of Finance to make regulations providing that “the current value of land in the managed forests property class shall be determined in accordance with the regulations.”

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I would think the intent here is to encourage better protection or a greater number of properties under the managed forests program or as conservation land. We certainly support the initiative to increase conservation land and managed forests in the province of Ontario and hope that the regulations that would come, if this bill were to pass third reading, would follow and would support that principle.

As I've said before, I was very proud to be part of a government, through the Lands for Life initiative, the Great Lakes Heritage Coast—part of a PC Party that brought in the Niagara Escarpment Commission Act, for example, or the Oak Ridges moraine legislation; a very strong commitment by the Ontario PC Party to preserving green space. We brought forward our own tax incentives to do so for individual private landowners as well. I haven't heard much debate about schedule A in Bill 197, but I hope I have correctly described the minister's intent that any regulations that were made are there to enhance the use and the viability of the conservation land and the forest management lands as well.

Schedule B: I wanted to add some further comment. Schedule B, as members will know, makes some changes to allow the retention of specific health care professionals. The bill, as currently written, gives the minister regulatory authority to determine which health care professions will benefit from changes in the way the taxes are assigned. To date, I think it has been a public commitment—not in legislation but a public commitment—that this would be restricted currently to doctors and to dentists. Certainly allowing family members, spouses and children of health care professionals to be shareholders in a professional corporation will, of course, permit the sharing of that profession's income across family members, bringing a tax benefit to that family and therefore contributing to the retention of doctors.

As I said, that has been extended as well to dentists under the Ministry of Finance's public commitments, but we would like to know reasons why other health care professionals have been excluded. I think this provision will actually be relatively limited in scope, depending on the income and the family status of the professionals—whether his or her spouse works, for example and the in-

come of his or her children. I think we know that splitting of income among children under 18 is limited under tax changes from 2000, so income splitting among children over 18 may be of use or may not be of use depending on what their current occupation is and their income levels.

That having been said, there are groups that have come forward to make a case, which I think is a very strong case, that they should also be allowed entry into this type of corporate tax benefit. Again, I would encourage the Ministry of Finance to work with me, as critic, and my colleague from the third party or the members of the assembly to best explore the other professions and to make sure that the financial impact is understood by all parties. But it seems to me sensible—unless given a major financial consideration that we could debate, but in absence of those numbers—to extend that benefit to other health professions or other professionals.

Just by way of example, the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association will make this point. They're not included under this legislation because of course they fall under a different act entirely, and their act would have to be adjusted so they could take advantage of this. But it seems to me sensible that it is something that should be investigated, with members' full knowledge of the costs. But concerning retention initiatives for doctors and dentists, one would wonder why we're not extending them to vets, for example, or other health care professionals like chiropractors, physiotherapists, podiatrists, psychologists, registered practical nurses, occupational therapists, opticians, optometrists, speech language pathologists and audiologists, midwives, denturists, dietitians, chiropodists—to name the regulated health professionals. As I said, I would expect that because of income levels that would be conducive to this type of savings, there might not be a lot of individuals in those professions who could take advantage of this tax initiative, but certainly to retain them in the province of Ontario and certainly to try to get them to continue to serve in rural areas, in small towns like those that a lot of us represent—losing them to the larger cities, losing them across the border to the States or other provinces—I think we should fully explore this and of course would support those initiatives, subject to fully understanding from the Ministry of Finance the costs therein. As I said, it does seem eminently sensible.

I know that those of us who represent rural ridings in all three areas know that there is a significant problem in attracting large animal vets to serve in those areas, certainly with BSE, among other issues the agricultural sector faces today. The income level of a rural vet, a large animal vet, has been challenged and, I would expect, in many areas has gone down substantially. We're seeing more and more grads heading into the small animal veterinary business, which is laudable; they are needed as well. But we need to recognize the declining number of individuals who want to practise large animal medicine in the rural or northern areas. Perhaps this type of tax benefit could encourage more to enter that particular profession.

I will skip through, because I know my colleague from Simcoe–Grey wants to talk about schedules C, D and E.

I wanted to make a little comment; I neglected schedule G as part of Bill 197. I don't know if I spoke to schedule G on second reading. I know my colleagues were in rapt attention, but I think I missed schedule G, which is the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario Act, 2005.

Well, here's the problem: This has been announced. I think it was part of the Bob Rae review, and it's in this bill that has been before the Legislature for some time. But no details have come forward as to how this council is going to operate. Certainly, we do have some concerns on accountability, and I hope we'll hear some commitments from government members that there will be strong accountability provisions as part of schedule G in Bill 197.

Let me give you an example of what causes us concern. The Greenbelt Foundation was recently flowed some \$25 million. I think it was born out of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing; the Minister of Tourism has responded to questions in the House about it. But what is actually driving people crazy in the greenbelt area, getting under their skin, is the fact that some \$1.5 million of those funds had been used to deluge airwaves and newspapers with some ads that many of my constituents have described as insulting. There is one about a deer, and I think the mother counsels her son that deer live in forests. Another lets us know that apples don't grow in grocery stores; they grow on trees. I'm not sure—

Interjection: Water doesn't come from the tap.

Mr. Hudak: And another one that water doesn't actually come from the tap. It tells us where water actually comes from.

I think, by and large, the people who listen to these ads will find them somewhat insulting.

What's even worse is that there are people in the greenbelt areas, like farmers, who have had their business options frozen, and taxpayers in communities like Lincoln who have had their growth frozen and will see their taxes rise to pay for essential services like roads and bridges or sewers. When they see this \$1.5 million going into these rather insulting advertisements and not flowing to assist farmers, not flowing to assist these municipalities that have had their growth frozen, they find that use of taxpayers' money very upsetting. To hear that on the radio on a regular basis or see it in newspapers just reinforces the fact that the government has no real commitment to helping out greenbelt municipalities or farmers that are caught in the greenbelt area. You would think they would have prioritized assisting agriculture to find new markets or new research in the greenbelt area rather than spending some \$1.5 million on annoying advertisements.

We've yet to find out if this advertising company is particularly connected to the Liberal campaign, like we heard about the \$6-million contract that went to the one company that had done some volunteer work for the

McGuinty campaign. Hopefully, that's not the case. Hopefully, it's just a misjudgement in the use of these funds to the Greenbelt Foundation.

The second thing that my constituents are increasingly upset about in the use of the Greenbelt Foundation's money is the fact that they have rented these posh offices in Yorkville. Any of those from throughout the province who have visited or shopped in Yorkville in the city of Toronto will know that this is some of the most expensive commercial real estate in the entire city. Why would the Greenbelt Foundation rent property in this very posh, expensive neighbourhood and use these funds, which could be better utilized for supporting farmers or municipalities in the greenbelt area, to go into this expensive commercial space, let alone it being in the city of Toronto? You would think it would be eminently more sensible to have the Greenbelt Foundation's office—this is a foundation supposedly to promote the greenbelt and make sure that the greenbelt is a success. You'd think they would have found office space in, say, Beamsville or Grimsby or somewhere else in the greenbelt area. I know there's a lot of empty office space that they could have utilized in the Niagara Peninsula or other parts of the province rather than investing who knows how much money in expensive real estate in the posh Yorkville neighbourhood.

I do hope they'll reconsider that. The Niagara Escarpment Commission, for example, has its offices in Georgetown, so it's quite close to those stakeholders. The escarpment runs a long way, as we all know, but at least they've made an effort to make some outreach to areas of the escarpment. I think it's regrettable that the Greenbelt Foundation has decided that Yorkville's plush scenery is the best place for that office. We certainly hope the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario in schedule G, whenever it is enacted and funded, will refrain from the irresponsible and, I suggest, partisan motives behind the Greenbelt Foundation spending to date.

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We also have brought forward questions in this assembly about the recent round of EQAO testing and the extent to which the results may have been doctored; for example, allowing students to use calculators for the entirety of the math test when they weren't allowed to do so before, and extending the time for the sitting. Colleagues in the assembly have talked about teachers being encouraged to mark the tests easier. So we're not exactly comparing apples to apples in the EQAO test. I do hope that if schedule G does move forward and this bill does go forward after third reading, they will refrain from those types of political motivations and ensure the schedule G quality council is truly motivated to improve the quality of post-secondary education.

Second last is schedule L, the Private Career Colleges Act. I hope I'm not stealing thunder from Simcoe–Grey or Lanark–Carleton. I suspect it's something that Lanark–Carleton will find quite interesting, knowing his own personal commitment to higher education. The Private Career Colleges Act will give the superintendent,

as I think the position is defined, of private career colleges the power to set up a regulatory scheme. I think members of the assembly always will be concerned about increased red tape in the operation of any particular business: Is government getting in the way? But I think that in this particular case, setting high standards through a regulatory scheme to govern the private career colleges is the right approach. I commend the previous Minister of Finance, Mr. Sorbara, who I know was committed to this personally, for bringing this forward. Of course, Mr. Kitchin at the Ontario Association of Career Colleges has done a tremendous job of pushing for this legislation for quite some time.

If it had been a separate standing bill, I would suspect it would have unanimous consent of the House. We may quibble with some minor details, but I think the need for quality control and high standards in career colleges would be supported by the vast number, if not fully supported, in the House. The problem is, it has been tucked into a financial bill that is an irresponsible implementation of budget initiatives with the high spending, the high taxes and the runaway deficits that I spoke to earlier in my remarks. Sadly, schedule L was included as part of this package. But I do think that as part of a larger financial package, it is a bit of a ray of sunshine amid a number of initiatives that I think are bad for the province, like the tax hikes, like the runaway spending, and like, as this bill does in several circumstances, giving ministers even greater authority to retroactively increase taxes, for example. They certainly have not earned the trust of taxpayers to be given new responsibilities.

The last thing is schedule M, which amends the Retail Sales Tax Act. I know many of my colleagues in the House, particularly my colleague from Waterloo-Wellington, Mr. Arnott, had brought forward an initiative to extend the sales tax exemption to booster seats for children from the current application to child car seats only. Of course, the government has brought forward a bill to mandate booster seats for children of a certain age and a certain size. My colleague from Waterloo-Wellington had rightly said that they then should, at the very least, extend the sales tax credit to cover those booster seats. I'm pleased to see that they have done so, and that aspect of schedule M is supportable, as my colleague has said. The sad fact of the matter is, though, it is jumbled into a financial plan that continues to change, that is irresponsible with taxpayer dollars and that is harming the viability of businesses in Ontario in taking the lion's share out of the pockets of hard-working taxpayers, seniors and young people.

I appreciate the opportunity to add some further comments to my Bill 197 second reading comments. I know my colleagues are very anxious to continue debate in the Legislature.

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I'm pleased to spend a few moments to speak on this budget bill. I believe it's the first significant budget bill the McGuinty government has put forward after a couple of years in office. One thing I note is that there's nothing in it for

jobs for the people of Collingwood. We have lost 520 jobs in the past 18 months. Alcoa Wheel Products of Collingwood—I'll read their letter in a moment—has written the Premier—and I've brought this up on other occasions, as has John Tory on several occasions during question period—indicating there are another 420 jobs at stake. This bill wipes out the corporate tax cuts we had in place. It wipes out a number of tax incentives that we had in place to attract industry. What we fail to see is any indication from this government that they understand the need for an economic policy, that they need to lead with jobs. In all of their decision-making—the greatest dignity you can give a human being is the opportunity for employment, not the opportunity to go on state welfare.

I note in some of the notes that our research has provided that, actually, welfare has gone up in the province of Ontario in the time this government has been in office. In fact, there are currently 388,391 Ontarians who rely on welfare each month. That's an increase of 498 since the Liberals took office in October 2003. The number of single employable people on welfare is up by 9,155 people. That's a 10% increase since October 2003. I remind you that each and every year of the Harris and Eves governments, the welfare rolls were going down and people were finding jobs. They weren't just dropping out of the statistics; they were finding jobs. You're going to see welfare rolls go up again if more companies leave places like Collingwood.

Today, of course, we've seen GM announce thousands and thousands of jobs—people to be laid off and families to have a terrible Christmas. Just to think that those are good-paying automotive jobs, traditionally the backbone of the Ontario economy, the automotive sector, and we're seeing massive layoffs, in spite of the fact that the government says it's spending \$500 million—probably unprecedented because they say everything they do is unprecedented, so let's take their word for it. They say they were using that money to attract the one big plant that has come to Ontario since the Liberals have been in office, and that's Toyota.

But Mr. Cordiano, the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, admitted in question period today for the first time, and we sat here aghast, that not one penny of the \$500 million has been spent yet. The question was: "Why are you giving GM money when they're laying off thousands and thousands of people, closing plants and shutting down runs in assembly lines in Ontario?" He got up and said, "Well, we haven't spent one penny."

Now, I recall just a few weeks ago people turning sod down in Cambridge on the Toyota plant and very specifically referencing this unprecedented \$500 million and that that was one of the primary reasons why Toyota came to the province. Well, they haven't got a penny. The way you guys across the way live up to promises, they may never see a penny. So I don't think Toyota made their decision—I have Honda in my riding, and I have a pretty good idea how these decisions are made by the Japanese. I'm sure your gift, or lack of gift, really had nothing to do with it. So you can take that off the brag

list, because it simply isn't true, and Mr. Cordiano straightened us out on that today.

Ellie Chaves, who is the plant manager at Alcoa Wheel Products Collingwood, wrote the Premier a very thoughtful letter on September 22. I'm just going to read it into the record.

"Premier McGuinty,

"Since the opening of the Ontario electricity market in May 2002, and particularly during the last few months, we have become increasingly concerned about the viability of our operations in Ontario. At the present time, the price of electricity is by far the main factor impacting our competitiveness.

"With its 420 employees in a community of approximately 16,000 people, Alcoa Wheel Products is a major employer in Collingwood. Our payroll and associated costs are in excess of \$20 million annually. We also buy more than \$6 million in goods and services from local vendors and pay around \$600,000 in municipal tax per year. Our plant produces cast aluminum wheels for customers like GM, Ford, DCX and Honda, which awarded us their plant manager's award in 2005 in recognition of our commitment to quality and customer service.

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"After much effort, we are actively looking to achieve significant gains in energy efficiency and overall productivity at our plant. Among other things, we are looking to maximize night shift usage when electricity prices tend to be lower. We have cut scrap rates by more than 40%. Attendance as well as our safety record are continuing to improve even though we already have an already positive track record. Overall, labour costs are down 15% while daily production is increasing. Despite all the above, the resulting benefits have been erased by rising electricity costs. Rather than securing our jobs and making our facility more competitive, the productivity gains recently achieved simply helped pay for the additional cost of electricity. In fact, so far this year, our average electricity cost is 17% higher than last year. For August 2005 alone, our power bill is up by 70%. On average this year, we are spending about \$115,000 per month more than last year for electricity supply, with this being the growing trend. This is simply not acceptable and sustainable in the highly competitive industry of aluminum casting."

By the way, Alcoa's main competitors are some of the very people that Premier McGuinty was making friends with over in China. China is our greatest competitor. He should have stayed here and actually had the round table in Collingwood, which the mayor and I asked for, but I'll get to that in a minute.

"Although we can appreciate your government's objective to retire coal-fired generation to improve air quality, we strongly believe that this must not be achieved to the detriment of Ontario workers. Electricity may even become a greater cause for concern in the future if coal-fired generation is mainly replaced by natural gas and refurbished nuclear generation. Not only is natural gas a very expensive and highly volatile energy

commodity, but it would likely become the price-setting unit during peak periods." As a former energy minister, I can tell Ellie that she's bang on. "As for nuclear, our past experience showed us how financially hazardous this path can be.

"We are urging the Ontario government to address this issue promptly. Without a doubt, the cost of electricity is one of the main challenges facing the Ontario manufacturing sector. Alcoa Wheel Products is seeking support and relief from the government to compensate for high electricity costs. In operation since 1987, our facility is well integrated in the Ontario economy and, most importantly, is a major economic driver for the Collingwood community. Despite all our efforts to preserve the competitiveness of our plant, our future in Ontario is seriously clouded by this single issue. It is the government's responsibility to ensure that the restructuring of the Ontario electricity sector does not result in a massive shift of industrial jobs outside our province.

"We look forward to hearing from you on this most critical issue.

"Sincerely,

"Ellie M. Chaves, CMA

"Plant manager

"Alcoa Wheels Products Collingwood"

That was the first industry that I've seen in many, many years come forward in such a cool way. There's nothing in this budget bill that will help them. As I said, you've taken out any of the tax savings they might have seen so they could maintain their competitiveness or bring back their competitiveness in the province of Ontario. Electricity rates are up 17%, a huge amount of money in a very short period of time, and it's having a ripple effect.

I'll read another letter of October 11, only a month ago, from Dean Muncaster, the chair of the LDC, the local electricity distribution company. Dean is chair of COLLUS Power Corp., the local LDC. By the way, the subject of the letter is "Industry Concerns Over High Electricity Prices." This particular budget bill does nothing, and we've seen nothing from the government in the past two years, that would give us any comfort on electricity prices. There's no transition program, which there should be.

When electricity prices went up—mark my words: It was after we left office that they started to skyrocket in such huge waves, and not totally the government's fault. Obviously we had a demand and supply problem, and supply wasn't meeting demand in the hot summer. But we had the blackout; we dealt with that. We had lots of challenges in the electricity sector too. The fact of the matter is, there's no economic plan, there's no energy plan. When we do see responses, they're back-of-an-ankle-type responses.

And you've got to get serious about jobs. Liberals traditionally have not been good on the job front. You have an opportunity to change that history in the next two years that you're in government. So far, you've got a failing grade.

Anyway, this letter from COLLUS says:

“Dear Mr. McGuinty:

“As chair of the local distribution company servicing Collingwood, Thornbury, Stayner and Creemore I feel compelled to write to you on behalf of our local industries.

“COLLUS Power Corp. is committed to providing excellent service and a reliable power system to all of our customers. Our staff has been strong supporters of many changes implemented by the government under your leadership with regards to the electricity industry. We have had key staff involved in many task force activities and we continue to work with a variety of groups in an effort to find the most efficient and cost-effective ways to implement the ongoing transformation of the industry. A key part of our effectiveness within our service territory is our close relationship with our industries. The manufacturing sector and the jobs it creates is the backbone of our community. The industries provide jobs both directly and indirectly through their use of services within the area.

“The automotive sector is particularly important to Collingwood and surrounding area. Alcoa Wheel Products, Pilkington Glass, Goodyear tire, Goodall Rubber, and VOA Canada are the largest industrial employers in our area, and collectively represent ... 35% of our electricity supply requirement. Over the last few months, many of our industries have raised significant concerns regarding the impact electricity prices have on their ability to remain competitive. They are finding it increasingly difficult to compete against similar plants both in the US and other countries. The continuing trend of increasing energy costs in Ontario is of growing concern to their parent companies. The IESO recently provided the following chart depicting the rising trend in pricing.” It shows the prices going up per kilowatt hour from September 2004 to September 2005. We see that it goes from just about five cents per kilowatt hour to just at the 10-cent mark, so you’ve seen a doubling of prices in one year—unheard of in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Muncaster goes on to say, “Your government has made impressive headway by allowing the LDCs to work with their customers on conservation initiatives.” So he’s trying to be fair to the Premier. “We applaud your foresight and commitment to conservation,” although I think he’s being very generous there. I haven’t really seen any conservation programs. “Unfortunately as you yourself have stated, conservation alone will not solve the immediate problem facing our industries. They need strong leadership beyond that which can be provided by local governments. The Ontario Energy Board has established fixed pricing plans for the residential and small commercial” sectors. “A similar pricing plan could provide our industries with some immediate comfort during the transition to a strong stable electricity market in Ontario.” Mr. Muncaster is making a suggestion to the Premier, and not just complaining.

“Collingwood has lost over 550 jobs in the past 18 months—a significant number for a community of our size.

“In each of the plant closings increasing electricity costs have been cited as a major reason for moving these facilities to other jurisdictions. Many of our remaining industrial customers are on the verge of following suit.

“On behalf of our industrial customers, I urge your government to address this issue with the utmost urgency. Every effort should be made to avoid further plant closings and job losses.

“I look forward to your reply on this important issue.”

This letter, along with the letter from Alcoa Wheel Products—the mayor, Terry Geddes, is doing an excellent job in Collingwood, and we wrote the Premier before he went to China and simply asked, “Would you yourself attend a round table of labour, industry, politicians and economic development people in the Collingwood area, and Clearview, Stayner, Wasaga Beach and the Town of the Blue Mountains in my riding, or send your senior cabinet ministers to meet with this group, which very much wants to tell your government first-hand the difficulties they’re having?” This is one of the most prosperous areas of the province, so if I’m having problems in my riding, where the unemployment rate has always been among the lowest in the province throughout my 42 years of life—I know that because I did papers on it when I was in university. The fact of the matter is, if I’m having problems in my part of the province, imagine what other parts are. Of course, we saw that in Oshawa today with the thousands and thousands of job losses being announced by General Motors.

The Premier hasn’t responded. When Mr. Cordiano, the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, was at a Honda line-off ceremony for the new Civic, I bent his elbow—

Mr. Miller: Ear.

Mr. Wilson: His ear; we weren’t bending our elbows. At that ceremony down in Alliston, he graciously said that he would meet with Alcoa. It was after that that we asked the Premier if he would also attend a round table. I think it’s very reasonable. If you don’t want me there because you think it’s partisan, at least listen to the mayor of Collingwood, who, by the way, was acclaimed in his last election and may very well be this time. He’s pretty popular and is doing a good job.

The fact of the matter is, the Premier—no response. John Tory, the leader of the official opposition, has asked the Premier on four separate occasions in question period if he would at least go and listen to the people of Collingwood and area. the Premier hasn’t said no, but he hasn’t said yes. He’s been asked so often now, though, that the answer obviously must be no.

On December 13, John Tory is going to hold that round table. We gave the Premier lots of time—a couple of months—to decide whether he was going to attend anything. But somebody has got to listen to them. I’m doing my best, as the local MPP. The MP, Helena Guergis, is doing her best. But these companies want to get to people who are more senior than me in terms of leadership in this place, so Mr. Tory has agreed to attend a round table on December 13. The mayor and I are in

the process of putting that together, along with council members.

1700

You shouldn't have to go grovelling like that. Jobs should be the number one issue for any government. I don't think that is just an ideology. As I said earlier in my remarks, the greatest dignity you can give a human being is the opportunity for employment. For those of us who grew up in families where perhaps our fathers were unemployed from time to time, and our brothers and sisters were unemployed from time to time, which occurs in every family, it's devastating. It's horrible. I feel very sorry for the people in Oshawa and area and Windsor, who are going to experience these layoffs, because there's no safety net here and very little hope. Again, the government says it spent a great pile of money to attract Toyota here. Today we find out that not one penny has flowed, and probably they had nothing to do with Toyota's decision to be here in the province. That's about jobs in my local area. I'll just take about five more minutes and then yield the floor to my very senior colleague, Mr. Sterling.

This \$5.6-billion deficit that the Tories apparently left the Liberals: First of all, I remind people when they ask me—not very many people ask me, by the way, but the odd one does, usually Tories, and they're disappointed that we left such a huge deficit behind. I remind them, first of all, that we left halfway through a fiscal year, and that you could have easily balanced the budget in your first year, if you just had some spending restraint. Of the \$5.6 billion, you probably racked up \$3.2 billion to \$3.4 billion.

When I was in cabinet—and I was a senior member in cabinet for eight years—I figured, as we were leaving, that we might have had about a \$2-billion problem that we would have dealt with in the next six months. The election was in October; the fiscal year ends on March 31. No government would panic about a \$2-billion deficit. When I was Minister of Health and we only had a \$17.4 billion budget, and growing every year—we never cut a penny out of health care. It's \$34 billion today, but even at \$17.4 billion when I was Minister of Health in 1995-97, \$2 billion would have been a Kodak moment. You don't even know what your invoices are until six months after the fiscal year, because doctors have up to six months to send in their invoices and so do hospitals.

For anyone to definitively say on their first day in office that there's a \$5.6-billion deficit—and by the way, they put that figure out, and then they go and hire Erik Peters, who hated us, for \$10,000 or something like that. He was hired by the NDP—I keep hearing that we hired him—on a 10-year, fixed term as auditor of this province. He hated us because we wouldn't give him more staff and we wouldn't give him a pay raise. The only time I ever heard that man speak to me was when he was riding me for more staff and a pay raise for his office. He didn't give a hoot about taxpayers in this province. A former CBC auditor comes in here, tells us horrible things over the years—he wouldn't even work with you. I was

running the biggest budget in government, and the man never met me.

You hired him for 10,000 bucks as a so-called independent consultant after you got into office. Well, consultant my butt. The fact of the matter is, he was a paid henchman for you, to back up the number you made up before you even hired him. You had a press release out before you even got the so-called independent report.

I don't think you were very responsible; I don't think you've been very responsible at all with the taxpayers' money. You've gouged taxpayers in the very year where you've probably had the best increase in revenue in recent history in this province. You've had the best increase in revenue because jobs have been good up till now and people have been employed. That's declining rapidly, and you're going to have a problem with revenue next year, but you've had record revenue. Corporate revenues went up significantly. Mind you, it's mostly the banks and that, which you guys used to rail against. You don't do anything about high interest rates and so on for consumers now, but you railed against them in opposition. Some of the big corporations that you hated have record profits this year, I note, including the car insurance companies you railed against in opposition. We never did get the 10% decrease we were supposed to get; most of us didn't get it, anyway. By the way, it was supposed to be 20% the first time that promise was made. But you know, when you have 231 promises, you can't be expected to keep too many of them.

In a year where you have unexpected record revenue increases, you actually dip into the pockets of ordinary Ontarians for all kinds of new taxes. Let's just review them for a moment here. The average family sees \$2,000 more out of their pocket this year in additional taxes to the Ontario government—not to any other government, just to the Ontario government. Of course, the first broken promise was the health tax. This ad firm—which, by the way, is seeing a 7,000% increase in its advertising contracts from the Liberal government since these guys came into office—made up the ad, and McGuinty was in all our living rooms during the 2003 election saying, "I will not raise your taxes." That turned out not to be true. So I don't know if the other ads they're making up for you guys are true now, but certainly the one they made up for you during the election wasn't true, because we all know about the \$300 to \$900 health tax you brought in. The health tax takes \$690 out of the pockets of the average Ontario family, which is two income earners making a total of \$61,000. So they're paying about \$690 a year more in a health tax—and by the way, people, if you do your own taxes this year, go to the back page. There is a line—there was one there last year, but this is the first year where it's a full-year hit on you, not just a half-year hit—that actually says, "Ontario health tax." All it is, folks—don't be fooled; it's not necessarily going into health care; it's going into general revenues. It doesn't even totally replace, but it's partly replacing, the surtax line. What's the difference? You guys label it "Ontario health tax." A tax is a tax is a tax. It all goes

into general revenues and then it's divvied up among the various ministries and programs. It's on the same line with the surtax that was brought in by David Peterson, originally. So we're back into the good old Liberal tax-and-spend days.

I'll just wind up by saying that electricity costs for the average home have gone up \$180 per year, and they're going to rise significantly in the spring. Your own ministers keep admitting that. Natural gas has gone up about \$65 a year per household. Gasoline, of course, is up over \$600 for the average family so far this year. Drivers' licences are up \$25. Of course, annual eye exams cost at least \$75—I had one the other day; mine cost \$88—not to mention if you need chiropractic services or any of the other delisted services. Finally, as a result of the cancelled 2004 income tax cuts, which we had put in place many years before and were being phased in in a sensible way, you lose another \$240.

So the average family is being hit hard, and there's no reason for it. You could balance the books of this province on the unexpected revenue alone: close to \$1.3 billion. You didn't have to tax people in a time when there's uncertainty in the economy. You need an economic plan to help places like Collingwood and you need to begin with the simple suggestion that we've made, and that is that the Premier or senior ministers come and listen to these towns where they're having problems. You need to know what the problems are before you can solve them. Then you need to hear solutions from the local communities. A lot of these people have been in business a lot longer than most of us have been in politics, except for Mr. Sterling—and I've taken a great deal of his time.

I appreciate those in the House on the Liberal side who were listening. Unfortunately, we'd like a few more senior cabinet ministers to take the job issue seriously. It's not only going to affect you at the polls, but it's going to affect you in your heart when we go through another period of time in this province, as we did in the past, when Mr. Peterson was last in, of great prosperity, and they blew it. You don't want to blow the prosperity. You don't want to blow the economic engine of Canada, called Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: The senior member from Lanark–Carleton.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): “Senior.”

This gives me an opportunity to draw some attention back to the original document: the budget of 2005-06. There are some interesting numbers and some interesting information in the budget document which I think people have long forgotten. Perhaps one of the most significant numbers is this: that this Liberal government, since October 4, 2003, has increased the provincial debt by \$10.4 billion. The Dalton McGuinty government has increased the debt of this province by over \$10 billion in the two years that he's been in government.

I think that's a significant number, a significant detraction from the ability of this group to be able to manage the finances of the province of Ontario when in

good times, in some of the best times this province has ever had, the Liberal government has increased the debt of the province by over \$10 billion. That's about a 7% or 8% increase, taking it from about \$135 billion or \$136 billion to \$146 billion.

1710

Another interesting factor is that I don't know, in the 28 years that I've had the privilege of representing people in eastern Ontario, when there has been a more difficult time for our agricultural sector. Our agricultural sector has been hit with tougher regulations to meet in terms of the environment and with the mad cow disease outbreak, the BSE outbreak, and they've had a flooding of the agricultural market in terms of commodities from the United States when they were highly subsidized. What did this government do for 2005-06, this financial year? They took a budget from \$733 million down to \$564 million, a huge decrease in resources to perhaps the most troubled sector in our economy.

I met last Friday afternoon with our agricultural critic, Toby Barrett, John Baird, and many representatives of the OFA from the city of Ottawa and the valley, Lanark, Renfrew, Dundas, Grenville and Leeds counties, and they were explaining to us, again, how desperate the agricultural sector is at this time. The OFA is meeting out near the airport in Toronto today and I believe they have a reception tonight. I just wonder how many Liberals are going to wander out there and say, “We cut your budget by 20% this year, but we really feel for you. We really want to help you,” when in fact they've cut the budget from \$733 million to \$564 million. That's what the document says.

The other interesting number I'd like to bring forth is the one with regard to the capital expenditures of the various ministries. One of the ministries that I was fortunate enough to lead was the Ministry of Transportation. In the year that I was there, in 2001, the Ministry of Transportation spent \$818 million on capital. We heard the transportation minister say today, “You didn't do anything for transportation. You didn't do anything for gridlock when you were there,” etc.

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): That's right.

Mr. Sterling: I see the parliamentary assistant. Guess what they're spending this year in transportation. It's \$622 million; 25% less than in 2001, and they claim that they're taking care of the gridlock problem.

The numbers don't lie. The numbers tell the story that in fact this government doesn't have its priorities in the areas where the people are hurting and wanting improvement. Transportation gridlock: 25% less in the budget. In terms of agriculture, where people are losing their homes and their farms: cut the budget by 20%. In terms of debt, when we're in some of the best economic times that we will see for a long period of time: increase the provincial debt by over \$10 billion in two years. This does not bode well for the taxpayers of Ontario.

It's not like they didn't get any more money to do anything. In fact, when they took over government, the revenues of the government were \$68.4 billion. It's now

projected, in the 2005-06 budget, to go up to \$82.1 billion—a huge 13% to 14% increase. They've had and they do have a huge amount of money to deal with the problems that they face. The one thing, though, that I would note, as the Chairman of the public accounts committee and having gone through a number of hearings in the past two years with respect to the auditor's report—which is, of course, the function of the public accounts committee—is there seems to be very little concern on the part of this government about saving money. They don't want to become more efficient. They are less concerned about becoming more efficient than they are concerned about creating new programs that have high profiles so that they can go out and announce that they're saving the world: "We're spending another \$30 million here, we're spending another \$50 million there, we're spending," whatever.

Now, notwithstanding that, I do realize that there are significant pressures, particularly in the health care area, but, as we heard at the public accounts conference in Niagara-on-the-Lake this summer, there are significant ways to save money in the health care industry and in our health care system. This government is not addressing that particular problem.

The public accounts committee deals with the Provincial Auditor's report, which usually comes down in late November. I understand that the Provincial Auditor's report will be coming down on December 6 of this year. After that, the public accounts committee will decide upon several—usually eight or nine, 10—sections of the auditor's report to review. We call before that committee the senior bureaucrats and the deputy ministers, who almost without exception come and appear in front of that committee. We have, over the past year, dealt with nine or 10 different subjects. One of the subjects we wanted to deal with was this notion that the minister campaigned in his budget to deal with the stranded debt of the electricity sector. You'll remember he tried the sleight of hand of \$4 billion so that he could have a balanced budget. As the Conservative caucus didn't think this was proper accounting, and it came out that the auditor didn't think it was proper accounting, the government withdrew that sleight of hand at a later date. One of the great parts of the public accounts committee is that it was brought to the fore and perhaps it brought a little bit of gentle pressure on the government to pull back that sleight of hand with regard to the accounting that they were presenting to the public of Ontario, that in fact they were reducing their budget by an extra \$4 billion.

We have dealt with some other important issues. One of them is the Family Responsibility Act—and we have published that report and tabled that report here in the Legislature. I think it's important to know that the Family Responsibility Office has, over the period of time, had difficulty with its information systems. The public accounts committee was recognizing how badly the Family Responsibility Office has been run in the past, and that they were shifting and turning with regard to how they were going to carry on in the future. In my

view, there has been no greater opportunity to save money than on their information systems in the Family Responsibility Office, yet this government refused to take the package which the province of British Columbia had in place, change a few of the rules with regard to the Family Responsibility Office and go home with a great system. In the province of British Columbia, the Family Responsibility Office, on average, answers the phone within four or five minutes. How many of us in our constituency offices have had calls from people saying they've been on the line for 45, 55 minutes and somebody hung up at the other end.

The government—and governments—must be more flexible in terms of the programming and the implementation of their programs. I think that the Family Responsibility Office showed us how that could have been done, yet I suspect that the \$15 million or \$16 million they're going to spend on their new IT system won't work in the end and we'll have that office back to the public accounts committee not for the second time but for the third time.

1720

It's my belief that we should change the standing orders of this Legislature to provide, as they do in Westminster and some other Parliaments, an automatic debate on reports from the public accounts committee. We don't have that. We table the report here. It's paid attention to by the deputy minister and the ministry, but that's where it ends. I think we have to give more accountability on that end.

My problem with this government is that they are not innovative. They are not saving money. They are not trying to be more efficient with taxpayers' money, and we need that if we're going to be able to provide our health care and education systems into the future.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I think I'll just respond to the comments that were made by the last speaker, and this is in connection with both of the reports we've done in public accounts, but frankly a new technology system that I raised a question about that was in the public eye today, because I'll bet you this one's going to come back to bite the government before too long as well.

My concern with the Family Responsibility Office is that there has been widespread recognition for a number of years now that a new computer system is needed. The question is, where does that sit at this point in time and what will be the outcome?

Regrettably—and I've been on the committee for a long time—every new initiative, effort, made by a government to bring in a new computer system has resulted in a fiasco. I am reminded of the fiasco involving Andersen/Accenture and the new computer system at social assistance. I am reminded of the integrated justice project and the decision that was finally made by the government to have to abandon that project after very significant cost overruns and technology that was not working.

We raised comments about the Family Responsibility Office when we had the ministry before us well over a year ago, asking what we hoped were relevant questions: “Is this system going to work? Is it going to do what needs to be done? Is it going to be helpful for the staff to use? Is it going to be too complex? Frankly, is it going to be completed on time?” We hope that we will get a positive response to that, but I don’t remain very optimistic.

But here again we had another example in the media, and one that I raised in the House, about Smart Systems. Five years now, the government has been pushing its e-health initiative—under the former government and now under the current government—where \$260 million has been spent and the folks in the hospital system who are supposed to use this saying they haven’t seen any deliverables. From our perspective, where the money is going for this project is a mystery. Frankly, I think that the most recent initiative, the government’s e-health initiative, is something else that the Auditor General should take a hard, long look at, because I bet we’d see another problem in the same vein as we’ve seen with other computer problems by various governments.

Ms. Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia–Lambton): I want to state, first of all, that the Budget Measures Act is consistent with the priorities that the Ontario government under Dalton McGuinty is building on. It builds on the determinants of creating a strong and healthy economy, and a healthy economic environment. We have provided in this budget historic investments in post-secondary education. That is one of the determinants of a strong economic base.

On deficit reduction, we’ve reduced the deficit that we inherited to \$3 billion, half of what was projected in 2004. It’s a plan to deliver better schools for improved learning. That’s what this budget does.

As I said, I listened with some humour, I guess, to the member from Simcoe–Grey and his eccentric remarks about the former Provincial Auditor. Erik Peters has had an impeccable reputation and maintained a high degree of professionalism in his capacity as Provincial Auditor. He had a job. His job was in a scrutiny role when it came to looking at the government finances.

That’s what this budget is all about. The naysayers can say what they want, but it is about creating a healthy environment, a social environment as well as an economic environment.

Mr. Jackson: Just to follow on the comments by the member for Sarnia–Lambton, the government has announced money for post-secondary over five years. The problem is that it’s not in this budget we’re being asked to vote for; it’s not there. So not only is the government not funding the money up front, which would be sort of a fiscal acid test of the political integrity of such an announcement; rather, it is designed to placate the post-secondary institutions, their students and their faculty into believing that they are going to get this money. Well, according to this budget, it’s not coming in year one.

The ministry and the minister and this government have already acknowledged that there will be a further \$5-billion deficit next year, which will bring their accumulated deficit, as Liberals in Ontario, in their third year to \$15 billion, and they still aren’t guaranteeing that their post-secondary money will flow in year two. They talk about accountability agreements, but they won’t tell the post-secondary institutions, whether they’re universities or colleges, what that will entail. They talk mysteriously about envelopes of money with outcomes, but they won’t tell them how those outcomes will be measured. Is it fair to a university that has a high graduating rate but not a very high job placement rate that they should be punished?

These are legitimate questions, but the Liberals are doing what Liberals do well. Buried in the budget is the real truth: that the dollars flowing this year do not match up with the political rhetoric, which not only the media has bought, but several members of the government as well.

Mr. Prue: I listened to the debate for the last hour. In the two minutes, I only have time to comment on two of the speakers.

The member from Erie–Lincoln raised the issue of income-splitting. This was, I have to admit, quite hidden from me in my first reading of the budget when things took place last May. It wasn’t until I had a group of people—chiropractors, veterinarians—come to my office and explain to me the unfairness of the budget provision—and when I looked at it, it is. It is very unfair for a government to single out one group of individuals, namely the doctors of this province, and leave out all of the other health professionals when it comes to income-splitting. It seems to me that if that is a fair reaction for the doctors—and I think the doctors requested this as part of their income package before they signed on with the government—it should also be fair for all the other health care professionals. So I’d like to commend the member for Erie–Lincoln for bringing this up as well.

The member from Lanark–Carleton talked about the agricultural sector. I have stood up in this House many times and told people that I am a boy from Toronto; I have spent my whole life here. I’ve never even really spent any time on a farm. But I will tell you that I do spend time with farmers. I do spend time when they come here to the Legislature or when they have to talk. Because we all know that without the farmers, it would be very difficult to eat. We would have to import all of the stuff at higher costs from the United States or elsewhere around the world. I know the farmers are hurting and they tell us they’re hurting. The grain and oilseeds producers were here just a week ago and told us how much more they had expected from this government and how much more they need, if not in this budget then at least to start looking ahead to the next one.

1730

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Lanark–Carleton has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Sterling: I’d like to thank all of the members who participated, especially the member for Beaches–East

York, who's obviously labouring today with a cold and laryngitis.

I guess of all of the remarks that I made, and given that the majority of the area that I represent is urban—the west part of the city of Ottawa, which was formerly the city of Kanata and incidentally, houses the greatest hockey team in North America, the Ottawa Senators—notwithstanding that tremendous asset that we have in Lanark–Carleton, we also have these farmers who are at the point of desperation. At the meeting that I was at with these people from the farming community, they're not talking just about trying to get their farm back in place; they're talking about how they're going to save their homes and how they can possibly even think about continuing farming. Their sons are not interested in it; their daughters are not interested in farming, because the young people have recognized that it's almost a hopeless cause. It's so hopeless, and yet we have a government which reduces the agriculture budget by about 25% to 30%.

I believe that what's important for a government overall is to set priorities, and those priorities should be based upon, first, the people who are most in need. In this province, at this time, I believe the people who are suffering the greatest are the agriculture community. They have been disregarded by this government.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. Martel: I'll be providing the concluding remarks here today for the NDP, as our critic is not in very good shape. So I'm going to do the remarks instead.

I'm going to focus on three things that the government promised that were not included in this budget. I also want to talk about something that the government promised it wouldn't do that found its way into last year's budget and still hasn't been addressed. Let me begin with that one, because that is the health tax that this government has imposed on Ontario families, a health tax that is horribly regressive and hits those at the lowest incomes, modest- and middle-income families, with a real whack of new taxes.

Let me go back to what Dalton McGuinty had to say about health taxes, health premiums—whatever court case or arbitration the government's involved in, it changes from “tax” to “premium” and back again. But let's just talk about the health tax that the government promised it wouldn't put forward. This goes back to January 25, 2002. It's a long way, but it's worth repeating because it was a press release put out by the Ontario Liberal Party in the midst of the Conservative leadership race that was going on at the time. The potential candidates for the Conservative leadership were musing openly about whether or not one or the other of them might bring in a health tax/health premium if elected. This is the Liberal response to the Conservatives publicly musing about the possibility of a health care tax/health care premium in Ontario.

Queen's Park, January 25, 2002: “Ontario Liberals oppose the return of OHIP premiums because they are a tax hike on working families, says” Liberal “leader Dalton McGuinty.”

Interjection.

Ms. Martel: Stick with me, Carol.

“Tory leadership candidates Ernie Eves and Chris Stockwell may want to raise taxes by charging families an additional \$1,000 a year for health care. I do not,” McGuinty said today.

“Families are already paying for health care with their taxes. Pay more for health care, pay twice for health care, but get less health care—that's the Tory plan. It's certainly not the Liberal plan....”

“If Eves were Premier, you'd pay at least three times: with your taxes, with your premiums, and, if you have the cash, out of your pocket to get premium service,” he said.

“Instead of looking for ways to make Ontarians pay more, we must look for better ways to invest the precious dollars Ontarians already give us, so they get improved health care.”

That's what the Premier promised before the election. Then after the election, in the first budget, he turns around and he whacks modest- and middle-income Ontarians with a brand new health tax that is horribly regressive, that is now bringing in \$2.4 billion to the Ontario treasury. And you know what? Ontarians are paying three times, just like Dalton McGuinty said before the election. They are paying for health care out of their general taxes, they are paying for health care with the new tax that the McGuinty Liberals whacked them with, and they are paying out of their own pockets for important health care services that this government delisted, like chiropractic services and eye exams. And if you're some of those cancer patients who were in the gallery last Thursday, then you're really paying out of your own pocket because you're trying to get life-saving cancer drugs in the United States at \$15,000 a pop for one month's treatment. For Erbitux, that is six months' worth of treatment.

So Dalton McGuinty was absolutely right: People pay enough for health care. Now they're paying three times, just like he said they wouldn't before the election, when he promised that he wouldn't bring in a health tax.

Not only did the McGuinty Liberals break their promise on the health tax, they've done nothing in a subsequent budget to try and deal with how horribly regressive it really is. Let me give you some examples. For someone who is making \$30,000 a year, that individual is now paying an astounding 24% more in provincial income tax just to pay for the health tax alone. Someone who makes \$200,000 a year pays only 3% more. So the wealthiest Ontarians just keep reaping the financial benefit of the 35% tax cuts for individuals first brought in by the Conservatives and kept in place by the Liberals.

Let me give you an example about how else these same folks at the top of the income scale continue to benefit. An individual with an income of \$100,000 got a 35% tax cut from the former Conservative government and another 18% tax cut from the federal Liberals. That's a combined tax gift of \$9,600. An individual with an income of \$125,000 got tax cuts of 30% from the

Conservatives and 16% from the federal Liberals. That's a combined tax gift of \$11,500. But modest- and middle-income Ontarians who got whacked by the health tax got the following: A couple making \$49,000 each will pay a staggering \$1,200 in new health taxes. Someone who has an income of \$125,000 pays only \$900. Where's the fairness in that? What happened to the promise made by Dalton McGuinty in 2002 that he would not charge families an additional \$1,000 a year in a health tax? On the contrary, he's charging some of these families \$1,200 a year in a new health tax in the province of Ontario.

I would have thought that, over and above breaking their promise, which is something the Liberals should be ashamed about, they would at least, in this budget, try to do something about how horribly regressive the health tax is. But no; this government continues to rake in \$2.4 billion from the health tax, primarily off the backs of modest- and middle-income families, who could ill afford it.

Let's talk about some of these families, because this is a promise that was made by the Liberals during the last election to June Callwood and Rabbi Arthur Bielfeld for the Campaign Against Child Poverty. This is a letter that Dalton McGuinty sent to the Campaign Against Child Poverty dated July 31, 2003. Mr. McGuinty promised the following:

"Second, my team and I oppose the Conservative government's practice of clawing back the national child benefit ... a practice we will end during our first mandate."

He went on to say in the questionnaire from the same group, the Campaign Against Child Poverty:

"We will end the clawback of the national child benefit supplement. The clawback is wrong and we will end it. The Harris-Eves government has reinforced the cycle of poverty, not broken it."

I can tell you that the McGuinty Liberal government has reinforced the cycle of poverty in Ontario, not broken it either, because what did this government do after they were elected? Did they fully end the clawback like they promised? No, they did not. All they did—the small, inconsequential, pitiful change that this government made for the poorest families in the province of Ontario—was to give them the inflation amount from the clawback. You see, every year the federal government gives 2% or 3% as an increase to the benefit itself, and it's that 2% to 3% increase—not the benefit itself, just the minor increase—that families in Ontario are getting right now. Do you know what that works out to be? For a family with one child, the increase amounts to \$48 a year—a far cry from the \$1,511 in benefits that would go to low-income families not on social assistance.

1740

It is a shame and it is shameful, first of all, that Mr. McGuinty could make that promise and then not deliver, but also that what the government would do instead was to give these families the most minuscule, minimal amount of money that they could possibly get, that is, the inflationary increase on the benefit itself. Families in

Ontario—the poorest families, the families on the lowest income—deserve to get this federal funding transferred to them. Talk about a gap in transfers. Isn't that the cruellest gap that we see in the province, when money in the federal government that should go to the poorest families, those on social assistance in this province, is instead clawed back by this government? No change on that horrible policy in this budget or in the budget bill that's before us.

This government also promised families, particularly those that need access to high-quality, regulated, non-profit child care, that they were going to put an additional \$300 million into child care in the province of Ontario. The Liberal government was very critical of the former Conservative government for not investing provincial dollars into child care. Well, we've gone through two budgets now, and I can tell you that this Liberal government has not lived up to its promise on child care either. This Liberal government, through two budgets, has yet to announce or flow 300 million new dollars of provincial money for child care in the province of Ontario. I can tell you that their Best Start program has ground to a halt because the funding, even though funding is coming from the feds, isn't enough to make a significant difference.

We have thousands and thousands and thousands of families where Mom and Dad are both in the workforce, who desperately need access to safe, regulated, high-quality child care and who cannot afford to pay for it. Child care in this province has become a luxury for modest- and middle-income families. Only those who are on a subsidy can get child care, and there are still long waiting lists for subsidies in many cities, Toronto included. Those who have the wherewithal, the financial means to pay, can also access it.

We need to recognize in this province that high-quality, regulated child care is a fundamental component of early childhood development, and we should be doing like Quebec does, which is to significantly increase the provincial budget, as Quebec did several years ago, to ensure that families who needed affordable child care could access it. What did we get in this budget? I regret to say that in this budget, just like the last, there's another broken Liberal promise, this time with respect to child care. There has been no provincial money provided to child care under the Liberals since they were elected—none; nada. If this government truly cared about kids, if this government was interested in living up to the promise made with the Best Start program, then this government would provide \$300 million like you promised for child care in the province of Ontario. That might actually start to make a difference for so many Ontario families who need access to high-quality, regulated child care for their children.

Finally, in the about six minutes that I have remaining—because I'm not going to do questions or comments, I'll just tell you; I'm just going to go until 10 to 6—I will focus again on autism. I focused on this in the speech that I made last week, but I want to return to it, because two weeks from today this Ontario government,

this Liberal McGuinty government, will be back in court trying to overturn a wonderful decision that was made by Justice Kiteley, and released at the end of March, 2005, with respect to autistic children in the province of Ontario. The Ontario government will be there again, contrary to the promise that their Premier made during the last election, using taxpayers' dollars—yours and mine—to fund the lawyers and fight these families instead of actually providing the IBI treatment that they promised during the last election.

It's worth reading into the record again the promise that was so clearly made by Dalton McGuinty during the 2003 election campaign, when he wrote to Nancy Morrison of Bradford, whose son Sean at the time was five—he has autism—and said the following: "I also believe that the lack of government-funded IBI treatment for autistic children over six is unfair and discriminatory. The Ontario Liberals support extending autism treatment beyond the age of six. We are not at all confident that the Harris-Eves Conservatives care to devise any innovative solution for autistic children over six—especially those with best outcome possibilities that might potentially be helped within the school system with specially trained EAs." Signed by Dalton McGuinty, leader of the Ontario Liberal Party.

What happened after the Liberals were elected? After the Liberals were elected, the same discriminatory policy against autistic children over the age of six, begun by the Conservatives, was continued under the Liberals. Many of those parents who thought the Liberals were going to be different and who voted for them on the basis of this promise on autism got the shock of their lives when, as their daughter or son turned six, they were cut off government-funded IBI, just like the Conservatives used to do before.

Not only did the government not change the discrimination against autistic children like Dalton McGuinty promised, but this government continued to fight these families just as aggressively in court and just as aggressively at the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal as the Conservatives ever did.

I was very pleased when Justice Kiteley ruled at the end of March, in a fabulous document that said the following. These are a summary of her rulings:

"I have found that the defendant"—that is, the government—"has violated the s. 15(1) rights of the infant plaintiffs on the basis of age with respect to the IEIP and on the basis of disability with respect to special education programs and services;..." and that this violation "was not justified under s. 1 of the charter...."

"With respect to the violations of the s. 15 rights of the infant plaintiffs [I am granting] declaratory relief and damages for past and future IBI/ABA, subject to proof by each family."

In short, she made it very clear that this government is violating the constitutional rights of these children on the basis of their age and their disability, and that the Minister of Education himself is violating the Education Act because he fails on an ongoing basis to provide the

services that autistic children need in school so they can learn. Let me quote what she specifically says about the Minister of Education on page 9 of her decision:

"Furthermore, the Minister of Education failed to fulfill the statutory duty to 'ensure that appropriate special education programs and special education services' were available to all exceptional pupils without payment of fees. In particular, the Minister of Education failed to develop policy and give direction to school boards to ensure that ABA/IBI services are provided to children of compulsory school age. Indeed, the actions and inactions of the Ministry of Education and the minister created a policy barrier to the availability of IBI/ABA in schools. The absence of ABI/IBI means that children with autism are excluded from the opportunity to access learning with the consequential deprivation of skills, the likelihood of isolation from society and the loss of the ability to exercise the rights and freedoms to which all Canadians are entitled."

Madam Justice Kiteley ruled in favour of the plaintiffs and told the government to do what the government promised in the last election it would do; that is, extend IBI/ABA to children over the age of six and ensure that that extension included the school system so that these kids could have their therapist in school so they could learn.

As I conclude, it is an absolute disgrace that two weeks from today, this government is going to go back to court and try to appeal the ruling of Justice Kiteley, a ruling which, as I've said earlier, would put into effect, put into force, the very promise that Dalton McGuinty made to all of these parents before the last election. That was to extend IBI to autistic children over the age of six and to ensure it was in the school system so that they could actually have an ability to learn.

I say to the government, shame on you for not living up to this promise, and shame on you for going back into court two weeks from now to waste more of my money and other taxpayers' money to fight these parents rather than giving their children the IBI treatment that you promised in the last election. I hope the court rules against you again.

It is a disgrace that so much time and so much money will be spent when you guys should just live up to the promise you made, do the right thing and extend IBI to all of those autistic children over six who need it, when they need it, including in the school system.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to an order of the House dated November 17, 2005, I'm now required to put the question.

Mr. Bradley has moved third reading of Bill 197, An Act to implement Budget measures. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. I remind members that this will be a five-minute bell.

I beg your attention. I've been handed by the chief government whip a note: "Pursuant to standing order

28(h), I request that the vote on the motion by Minister Bradley for third reading of Bill 197, An Act to implement Budget measures, be deferred until deferred votes, Tuesday, November 22, 2005.”

It being approaching 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 1:30 of the clock on Tuesday, November 22.

The House adjourned at 1752.

ERRATUM

No.	Page	Column	Line(s)	Should read:
19	942	2	40-43	word of our civil service: “I have reviewed the scoring for each competition to confirm that they received the highest score from an arm’s-length panel for each contract they received.” I think the Leader of the Opposition

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