



No. 50A

N° 50A

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly
of Ontario
Second Session, 38th Parliament

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

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 28 March 2006

Mardi 28 mars 2006

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Copies of Hansard

Copies of Hansard can be purchased from Publications Ontario: 880 Bay Street, Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1N8. e-mail: webpubont@gov.on.ca

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Exemplaires du Journal

Des exemplaires du Journal sont en vente à Publications Ontario : 880, rue Bay Toronto (Ontario), M7A 1N8 courriel : webpubont@gov.on.ca

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



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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 28 March 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 28 mars 2006

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): Councillor Lynn Silverton of Grey Highlands Council contacted me earlier this week to once again plead the case for more doctors in the Markdale area. Although I've raised this matter on many occasions before in this House, the McGuinty government has done very little to help alleviate the crisis situation.

As a former Minister of Health, I know it is difficult for any government to attract doctors to a specific area, but one thing this government can do is build a new hospital in Markdale. The current hospital is over 50 years old, and without major repairs the facility will soon not be able to meet the needs of the residents of Markdale, Flesherton, Dundalk and its surrounding rural areas. It's the only hospital between Owen Sound and Orangeville on the Highway 10 corridor, and serves almost 20,000 residents.

The hospital plays a vital role in response to motor vehicle accidents and also responds to the seasonal needs of the area's dynamic skiing community.

For the residents of Grey Highlands, the hospital offers 21 beds for in-patient care, an obstetrical service, general surgery and plastic surgery, and employs 89 staff members. Sadly, these services are provided in a building that is functionally obsolete.

As the Minister of Health well knows, the new hospital is planned for the Grey Gables site, where the Centre Grey General Hospital Foundation is leading the redevelopment campaign with the experienced assistance of people like Dr. Hamilton Hall, Pat Campbell, Ron Lipsett, Brian Mullin and Wayne Ferris.

We have a very serious doctor shortage in this area. I want to thank Ministers Smitherman and Caplan for meeting with me and my colleague from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and hospital officials back in November 2005. Now I call upon them once again to help us attract new doctors to the area by providing the people of this part of Grey county with the type of health services they certainly need and certainly deserve.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Vic Dhillon (Brampton West–Mississauga): I'm very proud to rise today to represent the citizens of

Brampton West–Mississauga after all the good news in our government's latest budget.

Investments in Brampton and Mississauga announced by our government since we took office in 2003 include the Highway 410 extension to Highway 10; the Highway 427 environmental assessment; the new Brampton Civic Hospital; redevelopment of Brampton Memorial Hospital; additions to the Trillium Health Centre in Mississauga; additional carpool lanes on Highway 403 in Mississauga; a \$95-million contribution to Brampton's rapid transit program, AcceleRide; \$65 million in this year's budget for Mississauga's Transitway; gas tax funding for Brampton and Mississauga transit; GO Transit investments; a GTA youth centre; small class sizes; textbooks and education investments; and more police officers. These initiatives amount to well over a \$1-billion investment in Brampton and Mississauga since our government's election in 2003.

After eight years of Conservative rule, Brampton and Mississauga were in a situation of regressive policy and deficits, and infrastructure, health and education deficits. Highway 407 was sold for short-term political opportunism. That is a great example of Conservatives working against the public interest. Our residents have been shortchanged by previous governments for far too long. Our government—

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

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): Once again, a mother is grieving for the loss of her young son. Jared Osidacz was laid to rest last Friday after he was murdered by his father. Jared will be remembered as a hero who died protecting two friends under attack by this violent and abusive man.

In 2002, Jenny Latimer of Burlington fled with her sons Kevin and Liam to Halton Women's Shelter after suffering constant verbal, emotional and physical abuse. When Jenny first made application to the courts to protect herself and her children, the father was granted supervised access, but within a few months this order was changed to grant unsupervised access outside the jurisdiction of the family. Kevin Latimer-Campbell died just three days short of his second birthday, five months after he plunged from a third-storey window in his father's apartment. According to the media, his father was unaware that Kevin had even fallen.

In May 2004, I introduced Kevin's Law in his memory to give a voice to children who suffer from abuse and die. Today I am retableting Kevin's Law in the absence of any commitment by the McGuinty government to protect children who are under parental access order by the court. This legislation was passed unanimously by this House on May 20, 2004, and sent to the Legislature's standing committee on justice policy, yet Minister Papatello chose to let it die on the order paper. Worse yet, there have been several bills before this House that could have been amended to include these important child protections. The McGuinty government only talks about protecting children from domestic violence. Kevin's Law is an example of how—

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

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): "I was lucky I was sitting in a chair," said East Ferris Mayor Bill Vrebosch at the news that the municipality of East Ferris would be receiving \$456,000 for infrastructure for his community through the Move Ontario program announced in our 2006 provincial budget last Thursday.

Mayor Barb Groves of Chisholm told me on Friday that the new funding of \$130,000 for her community means they will be able to repair two bridges this year instead of one.

Bill Brazeau, the mayor of Callander, noted that \$291,000 in his community is going to help them out a lot.

The mayor of North Bay stated that highlights in the budget for the city of North Bay included permission to spend the gasoline-tax-sharing funds on transit operations. The city is also receiving nearly \$3.4 million for roads and bridges and an additional \$1 million which can be used for the city's operations or capital this year.

Our government's plan is working for the north by investing in what matters most to the people of northern Ontario: education, health care and infrastructure. We are building opportunity and strengthening the economy, creating jobs and prosperity for all of us. Through Move Ontario alone, our government is investing over \$5 million in the riding of Nipissing. Municipalities will determine their own road and bridge priorities.

The 2006 budget builds on the McGuinty government's investments in northern Ontario, including our \$1.8-billion investment over five years to upgrade and expand highways under the northern Ontario highway strategy, which of course includes the four-laning of Highway 11. We are building on our investments in the north through the 2006 budget.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): Today I bring to the Legislature's attention the total neglect in the McGuinty budget for Durham region. The McGuinty Liberals' year-end spending spree effectively shut out Durham region. While the Liberals rushed to shove about \$1 billion into a slush fund to spend on transit and roads in other parts of the GTA, Durham

region was noticeably excluded in the one-time investment to help GTA municipalities.

It is clear that the Liberal government of Dalton McGuinty is incapable of representing this region. It appears that Premier McGuinty does not consider Durham region a high-priority area.

1340

Well, I can assure you that the Progressive Conservative candidate in Whitby-Ajax, Christine Elliott, does, and she is prepared to fight for fair funding for the people in Durham. She will fight for funding to extend the 407, expand the 401 and for GO trains. She will fight for fair funding of Durham hospitals. Today the residents in Whitby-Ajax continue to pay the illegal health tax while wait times in that riding are going up and services and staff are cut.

Governing is about choosing priorities. Last Thursday, Dalton McGuinty made his choice in his budget, and it didn't include the people of Durham and Whitby-Ajax. This Thursday, the electors of Whitby-Ajax get to make their choice to support a candidate who will stand up for them.

HAMILTON CENTRE FOR CIVIC INCLUSION

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): Fostering a positive and inclusive community requires dedicated space to fight discrimination and reduce barriers. I rise this afternoon to celebrate an important step in meeting that goal: the creation of the Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion.

Last week, the city of Hamilton provided \$125,000 for the establishment and operation of this new resource centre to encourage the participation and integration of members of immigrant, refugee and visible minority groups in the Hamilton community. In fact, more than 5,000 newcomers choose Hamilton as their home each year, 24% of Hamilton's population are immigrants and over 100 languages are spoken in our city.

Strengthening Hamilton's Community Initiative, established by former Mayor Robert Wade and comprised of over 70 organizations and 100 dedicated volunteers, spearheaded the creation of the centre for civic inclusion in partnership with the Settlement and Integration Services Organization, with the help of the United Way and the Hamilton Community Foundation. These numerous organizations and individuals worked extremely hard to establish the centre, which will combat racism at all levels of the community and create space for greater involvement by our diverse ethnoracial communities.

I want to congratulate my former colleagues on city council for taking this move. I urge the provincial government to follow the example of the city of Hamilton and provide needed tangible supports for the centre at the same time. I am proud to welcome the addition of the centre for civic inclusion to the city of Hamilton.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): I stand in my place today to report some of the feedback I heard from key stakeholders regarding last Thursday's budget, a budget designed largely to address the infrastructure deficit our government inherited when we came to office in 2003. The mayor of Cornwall, Phil Poirier, was quite pleased with the budget, saying that our investment in municipal infrastructure will go a long way towards helping the city complete much-needed and long-overdue water and waste water projects.

I have heard critics accuse our government of going on a spending spree with this budget—I just heard it. Nothing could be further from the truth. I am proud of the balance our government has struck between reducing the deficit the last government ran up and investing in the public infrastructure the last government allowed to crumble. Our government recognized that these investments in municipal infrastructure could not be put off any longer. Leading up to the budget, I met with representatives from the Canadian Automobile Association. They referenced the Ontario Auditor General's statement that roadway construction costs can jump from "\$1,000 to \$250,000 per lane kilometre over 15 years if proper maintenance schedules are not followed."

To call this investment a spending spree implies that roads, public transit lines, hospitals and schools are unimportant, and that money invested in them is wasted. With this attitude, it is no surprise that our important public works and services were so severely neglected by the last government. I am pleased to be part of a government that recognizes that building strong public infrastructure builds a stronger Ontario.

INSULIN PUMPS

Mr. Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay–Superior North): While last week's Ontario budget delivered good news to all parts of the province, there seems little question that the most widely praised aspect of it was a decision to fully fund insulin pumps for up to 6,500 children in the province.

As a private member from northwestern Ontario, I had the privilege of bringing forward legislation calling on our government to take this action. While my name was on the bill, it is no exaggeration to say that the overwhelming support this effort received, both inside the Legislature and all across the province, made this an unusually non-partisan campaign.

Time does not permit me to thank all the people who supported this crusade, but certainly the Canadian Diabetes Association and the Ontario Diabetes Action Partnership were tireless and inspiring in their efforts. If, however, I can pick one person who helped me truly understand what an enormous difference an insulin pump can make in day-to-day living, I must thank Derek Lawrence, a Thunder Bay teenager who bravely allowed his story to be told and whose life was indescribably

changed with the insulin pump. He represented to me the thousands of young people across the province who will no longer have to fight to have this life-altering pump become a normal part of their lives.

On behalf of all those who never gave up in their efforts to see this happen, I thank the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Health and our government for having the wisdom and compassion to make this dream a reality. It proves that if enough people believe in something and are willing to fight for it, truly good things can happen.

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): We have a new political entity in this province, and his name is Janus Tory. All members will recall that Janus was the Roman god with two faces. Unlike mere mortals, this demigod could speak out of both sides of his face at the same time.

In yesterday's response to the budget speech by the leader of the official opposition, he stated quite clearly that he felt the Minister of Finance should have used the extraordinary revenue available to him at year end and balanced the books. The Hansard will show that he said quite clearly, "I believe strongly that you should have balanced the budget." But our newest resident of Mount Olympus then spoke directly to the farmers and said, "You could have done more for the farmers and you should have done more for the farmers." Exactly how was the minister to do more when, in true Janus-like fashion, you disagreed with what he actually did?

When my farmers learned that you disagreed with the Minister of Finance's decision to help them by way of \$125 million in special assistance, they were, frankly, appalled. When the municipal leaders of my riding learned that you disagreed with the Minister of Finance's decision to upload some \$188 million of costs for long-overdue repairs to aging rural roads and bridges, they were dismayed. More than one of them said to me, "Once a downloader, always a downloader."

MPAC REPORT, OMBUDSMAN

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I beg to inform the House that I've laid upon the table a report of the Ombudsman of Ontario, made pursuant to section 11 of the Ombudsman Act, with regard to the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation.

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), supplementary estimates before the committee of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, Ministry of Agriculture and Food, and Ministry of Transportation are deemed to be passed by the committee and are deemed to be reported to and received by the House.

Pursuant to standing order 61(c), the supplementary estimates before the committee of the Ministry of Community and Social Services, Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, Ministry of Finance and Management Board Secretariat, not selected for consideration, are deemed to be received and concurred in.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

KEVIN'S LAW (CHILD AND FAMILY
SERVICES STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT), 2006
LOI KEVIN DE 2006 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES SERVICES
À L'ENFANCE ET À LA FAMILLE

Mr. Jackson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 83, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act and the Coroners Act to better protect the children of Ontario / Projet de loi 83, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille et la Loi sur les coroners pour mieux protéger les enfants de l'Ontario.

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

The member may make a brief statement. No.

1350

CARCINOID CANCER AND
NEUROENDOCRINE TUMOURS
AWARENESS MONTH ACT, 2006
LOI DE 2006 SUR LE MOIS
DE LA SENSIBILISATION
AU CANCER CARCINOÏDE
ET AUX TUMEURS
NEUROENDOCRINIENNES

Mr. Craitor moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 84, An Act to proclaim the month of May as Carcinoid Cancer and Neuroendocrine Tumours Awareness Month / Projet de loi 84, Loi proclamant le mois de mai Mois de la sensibilisation au cancer carcinoïde et aux tumeurs neuroendocriniennes.

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

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Mr. Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): It gives me great pleasure to introduce a bill to shine some light on a very dark disease. But before I do that, I'd like to thank the many people who have come from across Ontario and are in the galleries to support the introduction of this bill. In the group is a former colleague of mine, Alderman Carolynn Ioannoni of Niagara Falls, a carcinoid cancer survivor, and her close friends Liz and Kaitlin Brown, whose son Justin unfortunately was not a survivor.

I'm asking this House to name the month of May as Carcinoid Cancer and Neuroendocrine Tumours Awareness Month. Carcinoid cancer and its related tumours are small-growing tumours found mostly in the gastrointestinal system. Since this type of cancer grows very slowly compared to other cancers, it usually takes many years before the tumours become sizable or cause symptoms. By then, it's too late. As it is a rare form of cancer, carcinoid cancer is not well known. Unfortunately, carcinoid is discussed very little in the public and has a low profile in the medical community. Its presence can be easily missed. If caught earlier, the disease is very curable. If not caught, it can be deadly.

It's essential to raise the level of public awareness of carcinoid cancer and neuroendocrine tumours, so it's appropriate that this House shed some light on this little-known but deadly form of cancer by naming the month of May Carcinoid Cancer and Neuroendocrine Tumours Awareness Month. I'm proud and honoured to bring this bill forward.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I believe we have unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding the standing committee on public accounts.

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

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I move that, notwithstanding the order of the House dated June 17, 2004, during the months of March, April and May 2006 the standing committee on public accounts may meet on Thursday mornings until 1 p.m. and on Thursday afternoons following routine proceedings.

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

HOUSE SITTINGS

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

move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 to 9:30 on Tuesday 28 March 2006 for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Caplan has moved government notice of motion 79. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1355 to 1400.

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

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Gravelle, Michael	Ramal, Khalil
Arthurs, Wayne	Hardeman, Ernie	Ramsay, David
Balkissoon, Bas	Hoy, Pat	Rinaldi, Lou
Bartolucci, Rick	Jackson, Cameron	Runciman, Robert W.
Bentley, Christopher	Jeffrey, Linda	Ruprecht, Tony
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Kular, Kuldip	Sandals, Liz
Bountrogianni, Marie	Kwinter, Monte	Scott, Laurie
Broten, Laurel C.	Leal, Jeff	Smith, Monique
Brownell, Jim	Levac, Dave	Smitherman, George
Cansfield, Donna H.	Matthews, Deborah	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Caplan, David	Mauro, Bill	Takhar, Harinder S.
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	McNeely, Phil	Tascona, Joseph N.
Chudleigh, Ted	Miller, Norm	Van Bommel, Maria
Colle, Mike	Mitchell, Carol	Watson, Jim
Cordiano, Joseph	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wilkinson, John
Crozier, Bruce	Munro, Julia	Witmer, Elizabeth
Delaney, Bob	Parsons, Ernie	Wong, Tony C.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Patten, Richard	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	Peters, Steve	Yakabuski, John
Duncan, Dwight	Phillips, Gerry	Zimmer, David
Gerretsen, John	Qaadri, Shafiq	

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

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Martel, Shelley
Horwath, Andrea	Prue, Michael

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 62; the nays are 4.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): I'm pleased to advise members of the House of an important next step in building Ontario's conservation culture, one which ensures that the most vulnerable in our society will be able to benefit from lower energy costs. Earlier today, I joined with Peter Love, Ontario's chief conservation officer, and Dr. Gordon Chong, chairman of the Social Housing Services Corp., to announce the conservation bureau's financial support for the Social Housing Ser-

vices Corp. Green Light initiative. This province-wide initiative will help further energy conservation in the social housing sector. This investment of more than \$9 million is the first part of a larger program that will generate up to 100 megawatts of energy savings in the low-income sector, enough electricity to power 30,000 homes. This is a significant step in meeting our government's commitment to make energy conservation and energy efficiency a key part of Ontario's energy future.

Our government directed the Ontario Power Authority, through its conservation bureau, to make energy savings for low-income Ontarians a priority. They have been moving forward with this important decision. As Dr. Chong noted, social housing providers are dealing with rising energy costs: "With the conservation bureau's support, they will have the ability to take concrete steps to reduce energy consumption in their buildings. That's good news for them, for their funders and for the environment."

We want all Ontarians to have the tools and the opportunities to participate in a conservation culture, and we especially want to help to ensure that those Ontarians who have few financial resources will not be unfairly penalized, as we all have to address the real costs of electricity. This innovative program will help low-income Ontarians and service providers save energy and money. It is just one of the many steps we are taking as we provide the leadership and the action that will achieve a profound societal shift to create this culture of conservation. We can achieve significant savings for all Ontarians by reducing our overall electricity demand and, more particularly, by reducing our peak demand.

As many of you know, our government has established two important goals: to reduce Ontario's peak electricity demand by 5% by 2007 and to reduce consumption in our own government operations by 10% over the same period of time. We are achieving both goals. By undertaking energy-efficient retrofits and upgrades to our government buildings and by committing to deep water cooling, we are more than halfway toward meeting our own internal target of 10%.

We have also taken key actions toward our province-wide goal. Our government has given direction to the conservation bureau to obtain an additional 1,300 megawatts of conservation and demand-side management initiatives. We have invested in a wide range of sector-specific pilot projects in social housing, as I'm announcing today, and also in agriculture, schools, home construction and small businesses.

We've made it possible for our local electricity distribution companies to access approximately \$160 million over three years for conservation programs that reach their communities. I'm here to say that the local distribution companies, the utilities in this province, have stepped up to the mark and are doing phenomenal things in their communities to reduce energy consumption on behalf of their clients.

We created the conservation bureau and Ontario's first chief energy conservation officer to ensure that we fully

exploit Ontario's conservation potential. We can see the benefit of this dedicated approach in today's announcement of more than \$9 million in conservation funding.

In addition, as I indicated, the local distribution companies have undertaken innovative conservation and demand-side management projects, and we are hoping that many of these successful initiatives will be completely and fully supported by the work of the conservation bureau.

Our government also recently launched, in partnership with the local distribution companies, the powerWISE conservation public awareness program. Through television and print advertising, we are encouraging all Ontarians to conserve electricity, but we've also put into place net metering, a regulation that allows individuals to generate their own power from renewable resources and send any excess electricity back to the grid for credit.

We are committed to smart metering as a valuable tool to shift demand. We will deliver 800,000 smart meters by 2007 and have them fully installed across the province by 2010. Smart meters will give consumers the tools they need to manage their electricity use and ultimately lower their bills.

Recently, this House had third reading on Bill 21, the Energy Conservation Responsibility Act, which will help Ontario's public sector to further lead the way in energy conservation and help us manage those energy costs. It will require ministries, agencies and broader public sector organizations to prepare and publish conservation plans on a regular basis. It will also help to remove the barriers to energy conservation that may exist in current codes or bylaws.

Another bill that is before the House, Bill 51, if passed, will have important conservation impacts for municipalities. This legislation proposed by my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs includes key provisions that give municipalities new authority to set conditions for how new subdivisions are designed in ways that maximize energy efficiency.

Together, these initiatives help create the conditions for a culture of conservation. They are steps that will help Ontarians realize the substantial environmental and economic advantages of using their electricity more wisely. Today's announcement of more than \$9 million to support Social Housing Services Corp.'s Green Light initiative ensures that all Ontarians, including our most vulnerable citizens, will fully share in these benefits.

We recognize that this is phase one. Phase two will come next month, and it's just the beginning, as we continue to roll out the conservation initiatives across this province that engage all Ontarians to help and understand their need to use their energy wisely and to create that culture of conservation much needed in this province.

1410

IMMIGRATION WEBSITE

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I would like to inform the honourable

members of an important event that took place earlier this month while the House was adjourned. On March 7, at the Toronto Reference Library, I was proud to launch the Ontario government's first-ever international website portal dedicated to helping newcomers and potential newcomers start their new lives here in Ontario.

The website is Ontarioimmigration.ca. This website is a whole new way of saying, "Welcome to Ontario. Here is the information you need to get started," as it will provide potential immigrants with vital information in their source country before they even come to Ontario.

Each year, 125,000 newcomers choose Ontario as their home. We welcome more immigrants than any other province, and our province is better for it. As Ontario's population ages and our birth rate flattens, immigration becomes essential to our labour force and economy. We need the skills, global experience and willingness to work that newcomers bring.

Our new immigration website portal helps newcomers get up-to-date information about everything they need to know to start their new lives in Ontario, from starting a new business to discovering information about Ontario's vibrant communities, big and small.

It also promotes Ontario around the world online. We're showcasing our cities, towns and rural areas on this website, and we're welcoming newcomers to find out about Ontario before they choose to come here.

Newcomers can download key forms, such as immigration papers or a driver's licence application, and they can get answers to questions such as the following: "How do I enrol my children in school?" "What is the cost of housing and accommodation in various parts of Ontario?" "Where do you go to improve your language skills?" "What documentation would be helpful for a smooth transition into the labour force?"

Our new Ontarioimmigration.ca website will get people thinking about choosing Ontario. Then it will help them make the most of their new lives after they get here, so they can access all of Ontario's services, from health care to bridge training and language programs.

The website has 300 links to other Internet sites, and we're adding more. It provides convenient, one-window access to information and services from all three levels of government and from community organizations in every corner of this province. In the past, newcomers had to work to find the information they needed. This makes it much easier, whether you're in Mumbai, Lahore or Shanghai.

Ontarioimmigration.ca is a partnership with the federal government under the new Canada-Ontario immigration agreement, which I was proud to sign last November, an agreement which will see \$920 million of new federal investment in Ontario so that newcomers will be better able to reach their goals.

Municipalities are also partners in this project. Toronto, Windsor-Essex, Sudbury, Ottawa and London are the first cities to be featured on the immigration website. This will enable potential immigrants to investigate the incredible opportunities available in Ontario's

great communities, who see newcomers as a source of entrepreneurship, creativity, and economic and social value. This is their chance to attract newcomers to their communities and profile themselves internationally.

You may have seen our television ads informing newcomers about services available through our website. These ads are in 20 languages to reach as many people as possible. The ads also serve as a tremendous reminder to all Ontarians about the benefit that newcomers bring to our communities and economy.

Ontarioimmigration.ca has already registered over 28,000 visits—over 1,300 hits per day—and we have just begun. As we move forward, we'll keep adding new information, new links, and profiling more Ontario cities and towns.

The Ontarioimmigration.ca website is an international gateway to Ontario and its many diverse towns and cities. We are helping newcomers make the most of their new lives here and helping them to contribute to Ontario, because when newcomers succeed, Ontario succeeds.

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

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): I'm pleased to respond today to the statement by the Minister of Energy. What we heard here was mostly a rehashing of old announcements, which took up 90% of that announcement today, but I will say that finally we're actually hearing something about conservation, because three years into this mandate we've heard little on conservation other than a lot of talk. We are actually seeing some money, and that is good.

But I would ask the minister, what have you been doing, for example, about the energy appliance program we had in place that you cancelled and that has led to increased energy consumption because you failed to act on that during your mandate here? Last summer, there was a record consumption of energy in Ontario under your watch. Just today we are hearing about a program in social housing. I would also ask you, what about the other low-income people in this province, who could also benefit from energy conservation programs? We've got to stop hearing about it; we've got to see something.

Minister, you are three years into your mandate and you haven't done anything to seriously address the supply problem in this province. In fact, in your own words, you're backing off some of your supply commitments with regard to the shutting down and replacing of coal in this province because your plan cannot and will not work. It's time to admit that your plan is a failure, because it is no plan at all.

Minister, on December 9, you committed to respond to the OPA report within 60 days. That expired on February 9. You have yet to respond to that report. That is a report that deals directly with the supply issue in this province, and you have not met your commitment to respond to that report in the time you said you would. You're dragging your feet, you're wringing your hands, you're

wishy-washy and you're not answering the call to arms about solving energy problems in this province.

People want to know. They see ever-increasing electricity rates, they see little in conservation and they see little to give them solace on the supply-side issue—just talk, talk, talk. Talk is cheap, Minister. It is time to put the nose to the grindstone, the shoulder to the wheel and get to work on energy in this province. Supply is the issue. Unless you do, we will see the same problems this summer that existed last summer under your watch. It is time for real action in Ontario.

IMMIGRATION WEBSITE

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Response? The member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Kitchener–Waterloo is waiting patiently.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): On behalf of our party, I'm certainly pleased to respond to the announcement made by the minister today with respect to the Ontarioimmigration.ca website, which has been established in partnership with the federal government and that also includes our municipalities in that partnership. Our party welcomes any initiative that is going to assist newcomers to settle and integrate into communities in Ontario, so we welcome this today.

One of the issues I want to address, in a very non-partisan way—I think it's an issue that continues to concern all of us, an issue I've heard about for the 15 years I have been here—is the difficulties foreign-trained professionals still have. As I say, it's a non-partisan issue; it's an issue that I think we all, working together, are trying to resolve.

1420

There are many people who come here, including those in the medical profession who, as a result of having operated and worked in their own country of origin, want to come here and continue to work as doctors. Unfortunately, we've heard what happens when they make application. They're sometimes told, "Yes, when you go there, you will be able to continue to practise as a doctor" or an engineer or an accountant. Unfortunately, we know that is not the case.

I hope we will continue to work collectively with the federal government in order to ensure that accurate information is given to people in their country of origin so that when they arrive on these shores, just as my family did, they will know exactly what lies ahead. So I would encourage us to work together.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): I'm pleased to respond to the Minister of Energy. Another day in the Ontario Legislature and another attempt by the McGuinty government to convince the people of Ontario that the McGuinty Liberals actually care about energy efficiency and conservation.

Here is the reality. The McGuinty government proposes \$40 billion in new mega-nuclear plants, and what are they prepared to invest now in energy conservation? A grand total of \$169 million. So it's \$40 billion for nuclear and \$169 million for energy efficiency. I think anybody across Ontario would recognize this game for what it is.

This is a report by the Pembina Institute: Power for the Future. It was recently issued, and it is actually a report card on how little the McGuinty government has done with respect to energy efficiency over its first three years. It recommended, for example, that the government of Ontario adopt minimum energy efficiency standards under the Energy Efficiency Act equivalent to the energy efficiency levels required for Energy Star labelling for all major electricity-using devices. This is their report: "Unclear if Ministry of Energy" under the McGuinty government "currently has adequate resources to undertake a major updating project."

Recommendation 2: "The provincial building code should be amended to require R2000, Canadian building improvement program ... or equivalent energy efficiency performance for all new buildings and building renovations by 2010." The reaction? No action to date.

Number 4: "The most energy-efficient technologies in all sectors and end uses should be labelled through the Energy Star program." What's happened under the McGuinty government? No action to date.

The next recommendation: "The government of Ontario should establish a partnership with utilities, financial institutions, energy service companies, municipalities and other stakeholders to offer a series of financing mechanisms to assist electricity consumers in all sectors to finance the adoption of energy efficient products and technologies or other measures that can be financed out of the savings" that will achieve energy efficiency. The report card on the McGuinty government: No action to date.

"The government of Ontario should enter into an agreement with the federal government under the auspices of the federal government's Kyoto Protocol implementation plan to share the costs of providing ... financial incentives for the adoption of energy efficient technologies." One of the things that should be done is sales tax rebates for Energy Star products in all sectors and small-scale renewable energy power sources. What has the McGuinty government done to date? The report card says they removed the sales tax rebate on many of these things.

So, another day where the McGuinty government tries to convince the people of Ontario that they care about energy efficiency and conservation. But when you read from the Pembina Institute's report, nothing could be further from the truth.

IMMIGRATION WEBSITE

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I just want to say unequivocally that I like the Minister of

Citizenship, and it's with that in mind that I find it regrettable that the statement we're presented with here today has very little substance.

What we are talking about today is a website. What I want to say to the Minister of Citizenship is this: Are you going to include this Liberal promise in your website? This is the Liberal promise of 2003: "We will require that all Ontario trades and professions accelerate the entry of qualified new Canadians. If, after one year, the professional trade has not eliminated barriers to entry, we will act."

We are now close to the end of your third year, and while you have made some progress with doctors—George, George—and while we've made some progress on so many other fronts, including doctors and engineers, because I believe we could do so much more, we've done so little.

As it relates to engineers, we know for example that they insist that any engineer have one year of Canadian work experience before they work in Canada, no matter how much experience they already have. No effort has been made to deal with a profession that keeps foreign-trained, experienced engineers from getting the jobs they require—such a waste of human capital.

What we need is a concrete plan to help, so that those immigrants who come and are fully qualified get jobs. That's what we need, not a website.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): A question to the Premier: You already have a major credibility problem. You have a reputation for cynically making election promises and then, once in office, cynically breaking those promises one by one. And now, on Thursday, a spending spree of a budget that blasts the roof off provincial spending, a record \$6-billion increase in government spending and a budget that not only hid revenue but intentionally chose to run a deficit. Premier, would you agree that with this \$23-billion issue, Ontario's case has been greatly harmed because, quite frankly, we can't trust you with the finances of the province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): Let me say, first of all, how proud I am of the budget we put forward. I'm proud of it not so much because of the work that was put into it by representatives of our government and our devoted public service, but because I believe it reflects the values and priorities of the people of Ontario. The budget invests in the kinds of things Ontarians want us to invest in. We're investing in infrastructure for the first time in a long time in a way that is remarkable. We are investing again in health care and education. Those are the kinds of things Ontarians tell us are their three top priorities. The member opposite has a different perspective, but I would

suggest to him that he is out of step with the fundamental values and priorities of the people of Ontario.

Mr. Hudak: I would say to the Premier, we want to help you make the case with Ottawa, but you are making it awfully difficult. You took in \$3 billion in additional revenue; not only that, you hid it in your pocket by not bringing it forward in the third-quarter statement. You had a deficit that you intentionally ran of \$1.4 billion. Put those together, Premier. You had a \$3-billion increase in revenues at hand in windfall, and you ran a deficit of \$1.4 billion. You could have balanced that budget twice over, but instead went on a massive end-of-year spending spree.

Premier, your behaviour is like somebody who goes out, buys a new suit and shiny new shoes and goes begging with new cap in hand to Ottawa for more money. Premier, you've lost a lot of credibility. Would you admit that your budget has blown a major hole in our case with Ottawa and that we now have to fix your runaway spending spree of a budget?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: It is not surprising to have confirmed for us today that the member and the party he represents opposite don't understand the concept of one-time monies. The fact of the matter is that we had a better year than we had anticipated, and not just that, it was better than had been predicted by the private sector. The question then came, what is the best thing to do with those one-time monies?

It's important that the members opposite understand that when it comes to one-time monies, all you can make is a one-time investment. He's suggesting that we should have paid down the budget. I can tell you that the people of Ontario are not going to pay off their mortgage if the foundation is badly in need of repair. What we decided to do with these one-time monies was to make a one-time investment in something that is durable, something that is of lasting value, something that we can look back on generations from now and say, "That was the right thing to do." So we are investing heavily in infrastructure: roads, bridges and a new subway line. That's in keeping with the priorities and values of the people of Ontario.

1430

Mr. Hudak: Here's the problem, Premier: The reality is, nobody believes that line anymore. You've done the same thing each and every year, where you intentionally hide revenue and then, surprise, at the end of the year, you go on a last-minute spending spree. You know very well you did the same thing last year. The Provincial Auditor came after you for that. You went on a drunken sailor of a spending spree. Today you wake up sober at the Empire Club and start trying to make the case with Ottawa. We want to help in the fiscal gap campaign, we want to address that issue, but you're making it awfully hard when you go on end-of-year spending sprees and intentionally—intentionally—run a deficit, when you knew darn well you could balance the books two times over. Premier, will you admit you made a mistake, that you have harmed our case with Ottawa, and act to fix this budget and balance the books this fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I'm convinced that the member opposite's constituents would be very interested in hearing the position he's taking in this regard, because through this budget, for example, in the riding of Erie—Lincoln, we're sending to Fort Erie \$597,000 for roads and bridges; we're sending to Haldimand county \$3.716 million; Lincoln, \$606,000; Niagara, over \$8 million; Port Colborne, close to \$400,000; Wainfleet township, \$265,000; West Lincoln township, \$521,000—for a total of \$14,824,715 for roads and bridges in those communities. Let me say to the people of Erie—Lincoln, this member may not feel that this is important to the people living in that community, but this government believes it's time we invested in those roads and those bridges to improve the quality of life for people living in those communities.

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

Mr. Hudak: Premier, as you know, on the very same day you brought forward a spending spree of a budget that intentionally runs a deficit when it is not necessary, the province of Quebec came out with a balanced budget. In the province of Ontario our revenues were up \$6 billion from the previous year, and yet you still insist on running a deficit. Every new dollar that came in, you engaged in an end-of-year spending spree. So you tell me, how can they take your case that you presented today at the Empire Club seriously in Ottawa when Quebec balances their books under tougher times, and you had \$6 billion in Ontario and you couldn't balance the books? How can they take you seriously in Ottawa?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): At least the province can take comfort in the fact that we're not hiding a \$5.5-billion deficit the way you did—an absolutely scandalous budget.

As the Premier said, we had one-time money. We made strategic and prudent choices to invest that money in public infrastructure. We're investing it in new subways in the greater Toronto area. We're investing in roads and bridges throughout the province of Ontario. We invested in insulin pumps for young diabetic children and their families. Those investments: \$125 million for agriculture. Your leader yesterday said that we should have done more. Now you're saying, balance the budget and cut taxes. You're all over the board.

This government has a plan. We've eliminated three quarters of the deficit that his government left. We are investing in our health care deficit, our education deficit and our infrastructure deficit—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Hudak: I have yet to hear the Premier or his finance minister address the central question about how much damage they have done to our case with Ottawa and to the fiscal gap by this drunken-sailor spending spree of a budget. I pointed out that Quebec, with far less revenue coming in than the gluttonous \$6-billion spending increase of the Dalton McGuinty Liberals, found a

way to balance their books. The finance minister as well as the Premier must know that only two provinces now continue to run a deficit: Prince Edward Island and Ontario. And Prince Edward Island had nowhere near the revenue coming in that Ontario had this past year.

I'll ask the minister again, the finance minister who hid in the third-quarter finances the fact that he had about an additional \$1.8 billion in tax revenue coming in: Will you admit that you hid money you had coming in? And please tell us you're going to make a better case with Ottawa, because you've lost all your credibility on the finances.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: We've absolutely lost no credibility on that argument, for a whole variety of reasons. First of all, I'm pleased to say that the federal Minister of Finance, Mr. Flaherty, whom I've met with, has been most receptive to our arguments. You might remember Mr. Flaherty. We've had quite a good discussion with Mr. Flaherty.

If I may, I would also point out that the government of Ontario has never suggested that the gap is all about transfers between governments. The gap is about what Ontarians pay to Ottawa versus what Ontario gets back from Ottawa. It's much broader than that.

We are going to continue to press the new federal government. We're going to press them on all fronts. The case is strong. It's solid. I'll remind you that he and his party voted to support the case. It hasn't changed one stitch, other than that I must say Mr. Flaherty has been very receptive to our discussions, and I look forward to a continuing positive relationship with Mr. Flaherty as we work through all of these various issues.

Mr. Hudak: Of course we supported that resolution. We believe in the case, obviously. You're making it awfully hard to be taken seriously in Ottawa when every other province save PEI and Ontario have balanced their books. You're making it awfully hard when you rake in some \$6 billion in additional revenue and go on a massive spending spree. You're making the case awfully hard when you intentionally run a deficit when the minister knows full well he could have balanced that budget, and when you see spending like \$2 million in taxpayers' money for new furniture for your LHINs while taxpayers sit in hallways in a hospital just down the road. No wonder they see red when they hear about \$150,000 put into researching the sex lives of squirrels.

Minister, you have done tremendous damage to Ontario's case with Ottawa. Tell me you'll accept our amendment to the bill, that you'll come back and balance the books in 2005-06 like you should have from the beginning.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: The case on the gap hasn't been weakened at all, but let me tell you what case has been weakened: the case of the Conservative Party and their opposition to this budget. Here's what Mr. Tory said about balancing the budget: "I think the most important priority you could have dealt with in this budget, easily, based on the amount of money we have, is to balance." Then he said we should cut taxes. Then he said we

should spend more money uploading programs. Then he said we should spend more money on agriculture. Then he said we should have more money for rural Ontario. So he wants to balance the budget, cut taxes, spend more and not explain where any of it's going to come from, and we'll end up with a \$5.5-billion deficit, just like the one you left.

This government has a solid plan, a plan that is eliminating the health care deficit that that party and that government left, a plan that is eliminating the education and skills deficit, the infrastructure deficit and the fiscal deficit. We're on track. It's a balanced, prudent plan that reflects the priorities of the people of this great province.

1440

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Why is the McGuinty government still denying IBI treatment to autistic children?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): Let me say that in our first budget, we increased welfare rates by 3%. In our budget last week, we delivered another 2% increase. On top of that, we've ended the clawback of increases to the national child benefit. That means \$56 million more for children of parents on social assistance. Combined, a single parent of two on social assistance will see an increase of \$1,620 more this year than they would have in 2003. That's a 15.7% increase. We are pleased about the progress that we have made, but obviously there's always still more to be done.

Mr. Hampton: My question is, why is the McGuinty government still not funding IBI treatment for autistic children? You see, before the election, Premier, you sent letters and e-mails to desperate parents of autistic children and you said, "I believe that the lack of government-funded IBI treatment for autistic children over six is unfair and discriminatory."

Today, under the McGuinty government, hundreds of autistic children are on a waiting list for IBI treatment. They are not getting IBI treatment. We know, Premier, that your government had \$3 billion in surplus revenues last year, yet these children are still waiting for IBI treatment. Why haven't you kept your promise, Premier? Why aren't these children receiving IBI treatment instead of languishing on waiting lists?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): With regard to the question opposite, we are providing, through the co-operation of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and the Ministry of Education, whatever is the best treatment now for children with autism. The age limit has been lifted in terms of the eligibility for services, and we are now working within education in particular, collaboratively with people especially hired for the task, to be able to provide the principles of ABA and IBI within the school system and without, so that there is continuity between the treatment that children receive before school, at home and during the school day.

We have provided school boards with a net new needs basis for funding so that any special services that they provide in their context, in the school day, are funded. We've provided approximately \$40 million for that obligation. It applies equally to children of all different special needs, but it includes the proportion who have autism. We're busy working with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services to improve on those services to make sure they're appropriate, and those services are continuing to be expanded as needed.

Mr. Hampton: I'm not surprised the Premier shuffled off the question, because this is about the Premier's credibility gap: promising desperate parents and their autistic children that they will receive IBI treatment, and then it doesn't happen.

As for the Minister of Education, Minister, next to zero is happening in the school system. The only reason that some children are receiving treatment is because the court ordered you to do it, something which the McGuinty government then appealed against. You're not providing IBI treatment for children in schools, and you're not providing IBI treatment for other children not in school. There are children languishing on the waiting list while you fight tooth and nail against the very promise the Premier made.

I say to the Premier again: This was your promise to desperate parents, to vulnerable kids. You've got the \$3-billion budget surplus. Why are autistic children languishing on waiting lists while you deny them IBI treatment?

Hon. Mr. Kennedy: I just want to say that it may serve the member opposite's political purposes to pretend that nothing has been done, but far from it. We have increased spending for children with special needs by 65% in the school system, equally available to those families with autism. Now, if he wants to infer and provide information that isn't correct, that's his ethical choice to do so, but my colleague has hired 110 additional therapists. There's a 43% increase in children getting IBI treatment. That's just in the new system that's been created.

We would be happy if the member opposite was genuinely interested in the welfare of these children and genuinely wanted to sit down and look at the way that things have been reformed in the school system and to find out what's really happened. But I think we've seen a propensity on the part of the third party to raise this issue only when it's in their political purposes to make another point. Well, there's one point to be made: These children deserve respect—better respect than they're getting in the kind of questions and the kind of information being used by the member opposite.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is to the Premier. The Premier should know there is next to no IBI treatment going on in schools under the McGuinty government.

I want to remind you of what happened last fall at Kashechewan First Nation: Children covered in sores, swollen stomachs, airlifted from their homes because of tainted water. Regrettably, that story could have happened on many other First Nations across Ontario. My question is this: Just months after the disaster at Kashechewan, how do you justify cutting the aboriginal affairs budget by 57%, from \$49 million to \$21 million, when you have a budget surplus?

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

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): I would ask the member to look at the estimates, and to look at that line by line. What you will find, especially in the ministry of aboriginal affairs, is that, year over year, we have different land claim settlements that amount to millions of dollars. Some years, there is a lot there; in others, there is not. The amounts vary from year to year. So we have a base budget that remains the same as it was last year, but also we go in-year and require more dollars to settle land claims, and we do that every year, depending on the need.

Mr. Hampton: Again to the Premier, you once called the Kashechewan tainted water crisis an embarrassment. Let me tell you what's really embarrassing: tainted water on so many First Nations; so many children living in poverty on First Nations. You yourself referred to 10,000 aboriginal children living in impoverished conditions within the geographic boundaries of Toronto. Under those circumstances, the McGuinty government slashes the budget of the ministry responsible for aboriginal affairs by 57%. Premier, you may argue that this is a land claim somewhere. I think what's really going on here is that your government has lots to say about aboriginal issues, but when it comes to doing anything, you're not. In fact, you're headed in the wrong direction. You tell me, how do you justify those kinds of cuts to the ministry responsible for aboriginal affairs when you yourself say these situations are embarrassing in terms of the tainted water and aboriginal children living in poverty?

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: I think we need unanimous consent to get some more research money over there to the third party, because they need to take a look at the books. They need to take a look at the estimates and understand what's going on. I think the member needs to know—and I'm sure he does appreciate—the role that the Ontario government plays in regard to aboriginal issues in this province. Basically, it deals with land claims. We also have assistance with health through the Minister of Health. As he knows, it's the federal government that deals with all the infrastructure on reserves, on First Nations, and that includes water. He knows that. Again, I would say to the member, he needs to look at it line by line and understand that during the year we go to our contingency fund to settle land claims, and sometimes these come into the millions of dollars. It has nothing to do with the base funding of our ministry.

Mr. Hampton: The McGuinty government says it's nothing to do with the base funding of that ministry.

Well, I beg to tell the minister, when you go out and talk to First Nations, it has everything to do with the base funding of that ministry.

I want to get back to the Premier's credibility gap. The Premier said that he was going to help autistic children; it hasn't happened. The Premier said that First Nations children were a priority; they got a budget cut. The Premier said that he was going to end the clawback of the national child benefit supplement, that he was going to stop taking \$1,500 out of the pockets of the poorest kids. None of those things has happened under your government—all while you have a \$3-billion budget windfall. Premier, those were your promises. It's your credibility. How do you justify cutting, how do you justify denying, how do you justify continuing the clawback when you have a \$3-billion budget surplus—

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

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: I've never been as proud of Premier McGuinty, the Premier of this province of Ontario, as on that Tuesday afternoon in October when, in meeting with the chiefs from the James Bay coast, he said, "Do you know what? We've got to get those people out of that community for their health and for their safety." He did that, and I'm very proud of that decision.

1450

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): My question is for the Premier. Premier, you may recall that several months ago we raised with you the very lucrative advertising contracts being awarded to the Liberal agency that created the "I won't raise your taxes" ad, the biggest deception in Ontario electoral history. We now find that our concerns have been ignored and the Bensimon Byrne agency has been rewarded with a 63% increase in its retainer at the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. Premier, will you explain to the hard-pressed taxpayers of Ontario just why you are using their money to enrich spin doctors who helped you undertake the biggest and most expensive deception in Ontario electoral history? Why are you engaging in this blatant act of patronage?

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

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): As soon as we came into government, one of the things that we did was to begin work on a process that would make certain that when advertising agencies were selected, they went through a fair process of selection. In the case of the advertising agency, there's a three-person panel with no politicians on it—it's civil servants who go through it—and they get three firms in, they review the three firms and select the one that is best qualified to do it, with no involvement by any of the political people at all. We have put in place a process.

I think the public should be confident that we make sure that their money is well looked after and that the

best possible company is selected. In this particular case, this particular company has been engaged by the province of Ontario for I think at least four or five years, going back to a previous government. It's a well-regarded organization selected by three civil servants merely on the basis of who can best do this job.

Mr. Runciman: The fair process is clearly a Liberal litmus test. This same firm, Bensimon Byrne, had their wallets lined to the tune of 6.3 million tax dollars the year after the provincial election—a 6,000% increase over their previous billing. Now we hear they're getting another increase of 63% from what is now apparently a Liberal milk cow and haven for Liberal hacks, the lottery corporation. All of this is a reward for creating the most deceptive ad in Ontario electoral history.

Minister, will you undertake to table a detailed report outlining the increased lottery corporation initiatives that were used to justify what appears to be just another juicy payoff to a Liberal friend and the competitive process used to select the firm? Will you do that?

Hon. Mr. Phillips: I'll just say to the public that what they heard there is an accusation against a company—they should be aware that this organization was selected by the previous government. They were the agency selected to do the work at the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. None of that language talking about that organization came out of the government of the day.

I would just say to the public that this is a well-respected company. The previous government had already selected them to do work. It is a well-regarded organization selected by a fair process of bureaucrats, civil servants, going through a well-documented process.

You do the business community a disservice when you make those kinds of accusations, particularly against a company that the previous government, your government, hired for this specific organization. I think we must be somewhat cautious with these broad-brush accusations against a well-regarded company and the selection done by a fair, unbiased process to make sure that taxpayer money is well-regarded.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is to the Minister of Finance. Today, Ontario's property owners heard from the Ombudsman that MPAC is badly dysfunctional, that its assessments are not credible and, in some cases, the assessments were actually illegal. Mr. Marin directs two key recommendations to your government, but, despite having had two and a half years to clean up the property tax mess, you say on both key questions that you need more time to consult.

Minister, many thousands of property tax owners found out today that their assessments may be very wrong and, in some cases, may be illegal. They have exactly 36 hours in which to appeal. By the time they get the newspaper tomorrow and read about this, they will have 24 hours. What I'm asking you is, will you commit to extending the deadline for at least 30 more days so that

property owners can launch their appeals with adequate preparation time?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): The Premier and I met this morning, and under his direction I have drafted legislation, which I will introduce tomorrow, to extend the deadline for 90 days. I hope that both opposition parties will support its passage in one day.

Mr. Prue: I would like to start by thanking the minister, because this is the first positive aspect around this entire—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Stop the clock. I am unable to hear the member from Beaches—East York. I need to be able to hear the member.

The member for Beaches—East York.

Mr. Prue: You know that part of the problem, and the reason so many people are upset about their property tax assessment, is that from that assessment this province derives many billions of dollars because of the down-loading. So the second part of what we want to know: The provincially mandated programs must be uploaded back to the province, and market value assessment—the whole thing—needs a sober second look as to whether or not this is the proper avenue from which to get this money.

That is my question: Will the Premier also commit to uploading those monies, as well as the 90 days, so that property tax assessment in Ontario can be fair to all businesses and property owners?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: I guess the member just can't take "yes" for an answer.

We indicated that we were looking forward to receiving the Ombudsman's report. I was delighted to receive it today. Seventeen of the 22 recommendations have already been acted on by MPAC. There are three that MPAC is going to consult on, moving forward. There are two that relate specifically to the province that both involve legislative change. We take his recommendations very seriously and we're going to begin to consult with the stakeholders with respect to how to implement them.

Let me say this: This government is prepared to work with the Ombudsman—with many others—to make sure that we get this thing right. But we're going to do it appropriately, and we're going to do it with a little more foresight and wisdom than we saw from either the NDP or the Conservative government on this file.

I look forward to the NDP's support of the bill that I will introduce tomorrow to extend that, not just to 30 days but to 90 days. We will continue to consult stakeholders as we look at legislative reform resulting from the Ombudsman's report.

DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL

RENOUVEAU DÉMOCRATIQUE

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering—Ajax—Uxbridge): My question today is for the minister responsible for

democratic renewal. Yesterday you announced the beginning of what I believe to be an important undertaking, the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform, which is scheduled to begin meeting in the fall and to report back to Ontarians in May next year. I was honoured to sit on the select committee last summer and fall. This committee report helped to inform this process, and I know it will be of value to the assembly.

I believe that this kind of citizen engagement and consultation is unprecedented in the province of Ontario, and I'm sure that my constituents are interested in finding out more about it. Can you explain exactly what the citizens' assembly is planning to undertake and how this process will unfold?

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): That's an excellent question, and I'm happy to address it. Yes, this House and I are incredibly grateful for the work of the select committee. Their report will be a valuable resource for the citizens' assembly.

You're quite right to say that this assembly process is a groundbreaking one for our province: This is the most extensive citizen engagement initiative ever undertaken in Ontario.

1500

Pour la première fois dans l'histoire de l'Ontario, les Ontariens et Ontariennes auront la possibilité de participer à une discussion pleine et ouverte sur notre système électoral.

The citizens' assembly will, for the first time in Ontario's history, give Ontarians the opportunity to participate in a full, open debate on our electoral system. The issue for the assembly is which electoral system it thinks would best serve our province: the current first-past-the-post system or an alternative. If the citizens' assembly recommends that we exchange our system for another, that recommendation will be put to the people of Ontario in a binding referendum at some time on or before the end of our government's current mandate. Never before have Ontarians been given such a meaningful voice in shaping our democracy, and I'm proud to announce this process.

Mr. Arthurs: Thank you, Minister. I believe this will certainly be a rather exciting and interesting process. I'm sure that many of my constituents will undertake to get involved.

Who will be chosen to be members of the citizens' assembly, how will they be chosen, and what can people do if they want to engage in this process?

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: The assembly will be made up of 103 citizens—one from each of Ontario's ridings. There will be 52 female members and 51 male members, and at least one of the members of the assembly will be of aboriginal ancestry. Members will be randomly selected from the voters' lists, so I encourage all MPPs to encourage their constituents to ensure they are eligible to participate in this memorable opportunity and are on the voters' list by contacting Elections Ontario by April 10. The selection process run by Elections Ontario will begin shortly after April 10.

We also announced yesterday that the assembly will be chaired by Mr. George Thomson. He's a respected and experienced former judge, teacher and deputy minister at both the federal and provincial levels of government. I'm very excited that someone who brings such a lifetime of public service has decided to be the leader in this process.

Les 103 membres de l'Assemblée recommanderont si nous devrions maintenir notre système électoral actuel ou qui nous devrions adopter un autre. Mais sous la direction de M. Thomson, tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes partout dans la province auront la possibilité de prendre part à cette initiative.

AGRICULTURE FUNDING

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): To the Minister of Finance: You've brought down a budget designed to buy votes in this week's by-elections. In fact, you were at the Whitby–Ajax by-election this morning, trying to peddle your budget for a few votes. But you've just cut the agriculture budget by 21%. Minister of Finance, how did you explain your 21% agriculture cut to the farmers you were speaking to this morning at the Whitby Curling Club?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): To the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): It is absolutely unacceptable that a member on that side of the House would try to present such inaccuracies. And I'm being polite.

However, I would invite the honourable member to review the budgets of 2001, 2002 and 2003. You will see that the former government budgeted precisely zero dollars for a contingency for the agriculture budget. Using your methodology, that would suggest that your government cut agriculture funding every year you were in office.

It is irresponsible that you are perpetrating that. Our base budget has increased because our government continues to be committed to the agriculture industry in this province.

Mr. Barrett: Minister of Finance, you were with the farmers this morning. You did cut the ag budget 21%. As well, Minister—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order.

Mr. Barrett: Minister of Finance, you were with cash crop farmers this morning at the Whitby Curling Club. You've reduced their particular amount of support by 52%. You told the farmers this morning to go to Ottawa. However, over 30 million federal dollars have already been delivered to 11,000 Ontario cash crop farmers. Your government waited an extra month before announcing a package that was 52%, and it still has not been delivered. Your government has turned your back on those corn and soybean farmers that you were speaking with this morning. Minister of Finance, this morning those farmers wanted answers from you. They asked you for financial

support. They are looking for an answer, and I think they're looking for an apology from you for the neglect and the insult that I saw this morning in Whitby.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: Back to the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I first of all think that it is very important—it's unfortunate, because of the rhetoric that's being used over there, that we tend to lose sight of the fact that there is a crisis in agriculture, particularly in grains and oilseeds and fruits and vegetable growers.

I would also like to recognize that we have a farmer in the members' gallery today, a guest of the Liberal government, Mr. Stephen Webster.

Our government has recognized the plight of farmers. That is why, two weeks before the budget, we announced, as we were requested to do by the farmers who came to meet with the Premier at the Premier's summit—they wanted a down payment, they wanted a show of good faith, and so we invested \$125 million: \$80 million for grains and oilseeds and \$35 million for fruit and vegetable growers.

We continue to be committed to work with the federal government on a multi-year partnership. Will you get on your high horse now, get to Ottawa and demand from your federal cousins that—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is to the Premier. Many Ontarians are very angry that your budget does nothing to stop the creeping privatization of Ontario's hospital system. They know that your private hospital scheme will result in construction costs that may be 30% or 40% higher than they would be if it was done in the public way. That's because private sector borrowing costs are typically much higher. I have a very simple question: Do you have any study that examines the costs of private hospitals to the public treasury, and if you do, will you release it to this Legislature?

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

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'm very proud of the opportunity to respond to the honourable member's question, because it does give us a chance to repeat something that's very important to Ontarians. I've had the privilege of attending many of the events, some of which were around hospitals that are funded and financed in a traditional fashion and in other fashions. But what I've recognized in all of them is the celebration that occurs in the local community as they come to understand that this government is addressing the challenges of addressing hospital construction in such a fashion that, under our life, under our initiative and five-year plan, we will have invested more in hospital construction in the province of Ontario than the last four governments of Ontario combined.

As I've had the opportunity to speak about before, the member was with me just the other day at Toronto East

General, in his very riding, where we're making a long-needed capital investment to enhance the cancer capacities and the emergency room capacities in that very hospital; just one of a variety of signature projects across this province that are dramatically renewing the hospital infrastructure—long overdue.

Mr. Prue: My question was, do you have any studies that show the amount of money that's going to cost in excess or that's going to be saved? That's what we want to see, a scientific study, because we on this side of the House have a study by an independent economist that verifies that the Brampton private hospital alone would cost \$175 million more than if it was built as a public hospital. That translates into billions of dollars if you multiply that by the 20 or so hospitals you plan to build.

The tragedy is that these new hospitals, schools and transit facilities all over the province won't get built because the money that would be going to vital community projects is ending up going to Bay Street private-sector deal makers. My question to you is, can you tell me why you are going this private route? Why are you shovelling money out to Bay Street at the expense of Main Street projects?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The real tragedy is that under that party's life in government, they built no hospital infrastructure in Ontario. Hardly a piece of cement was poured, hardly a brick was laid under their time in office, and the honourable member dares to ask that question. Go to the community of Brampton and talk to the people of Brampton, or to their members in here, and ask them about the pride they're celebrating as this enormous, impressive new hospital comes to life. Just a short time ago, six construction cranes were on site in Brampton, and now the building has been enclosed. It's hardly more than a year away from providing long-needed services to the people of that community.

I lived in Brampton and I used to ride my trail bike on the site that, 30 years ago, was designated as the new hospital site. I'm awfully proud, alongside these members from Brampton, to be part of the government that has, at long last, delivered a much-needed hospital to that community, which is one of the fastest-growing communities all across the country. People will celebrate pride in their local hospital, and for the honourable member to seek to diminish this for his partisan games—

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

1510

HIGHWAY 410

Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. My constituents in Brampton were delighted to hear about the announcement regarding the Highway 410 extension. Can you please explain to us what the announcement entails and what this means for the residents and commuters in our great city of Brampton?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): Highway 410 is an important economic link in

the region of Peel. This area is fast expanding. What this announcement really means is that we will be expanding nine kilometres of stretch from Bovaird Drive in Brampton to Highway 10 in Caledon. For the second phase, we have already called for tenders, and we will be starting construction in the summer of this year. Hopefully, we'll finish sometime next year. We have already spent about \$40 million on this project, and we will be spending another \$110 million to really improve Highway 410. It will help us relieve congestion in this area. What it really means is that it will make the quality of life better for the people of Brampton, and also will relieve congestion.

Mr. Kular: My constituents were also happy to learn that Brampton will benefit from a \$95-million investment allowing them to build an AcceleRide project. Can you tell us, Minister, why this project is a priority and what the people of Brampton can expect to see from this good-news announcement?

Hon. Mr. Takhar: I want to thank the member for his support of this project as well. This is a \$95-million project that will improve public transit in the city of Brampton. Brampton, as most of the members in this House know, is a fast-growing community, and this is an incredible opportunity for us to assist the people with their public transit needs. This AcceleRide project will actually connect Brampton to Mississauga through public transit, and will also connect with York. It will make the connections easier to serve the people of that region much better. Again, this is a measure we have taken to assist the municipalities with their public transit needs so that congestion issues can be addressed and people can commute from one place to another quickly, effectively and in a reliable manner. It will help us reduce congestion as well.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): My question is for the Premier. You promised to investigate and solve the problems with the property assessment system in this province. After doing nothing for months, you announced that it was unnecessary and that there was no need to investigate it. You dismissed the need for a report at all. Today the Ombudsman has released his report, and only as a result of that are you now being pressed into action. We appreciate the deadline extension on the appeals; however, not if it's only used to delay action on this issue. Premier, will you commit that, during the appeal period, you will bring forth action on this file for the people of the province, such as was recommended by my colleague from Erie–Lincoln—the capping of assessments and that kind of thing—so that long-term property tax relief can be felt by the people of Ontario, who are already under a tremendous burden as a result of your government?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): The reason that Ontario property owners are under some kind of a heavy burden

is because of a system that was foisted upon them by the previous Conservative government, somewhat akin to a tire with seven separate patches on it.

We are pleased to have received the Ombudsman's report. I can tell you that in our constituency offices throughout the province—and I'm sure I speak for every member of this provincial Parliament—we have heard from constituents who are very concerned about what has been foisted upon them by way of a property tax system. The minister has spoken today about the relief that will be granted immediately, assuming we get all-party support, to extend the deadline for appeals. Beyond that, we have received a number of recommendations: Twenty were directed to MPAC and their operations and two deal specifically with the government. We will carefully consider those that have been brought to our attention, as I know that MPAC and municipalities will carefully consider those that have been brought to their attention as well.

Mr. Yakabuski: Careful consideration is one thing, but action is quite another thing. Mr. Premier, that's what we do as legislators here: We update statutes and bring laws in to recognize the needs of the time. Changing circumstances require that we update legislation. You're on record as saying that this legislation didn't need to be changed. Under pressure, you said, "Well, it's a municipal issue. It's their problem; it's not ours." But now, as a result of the Ombudsman's report, he is saying it is our problem; it is the problem of this government and this Legislature. We need a commitment today that action will be taken so that property owners in this province, who are under tremendous pressure as a result of the other responsibilities placed on them by your government, will not continue to see skyrocketing property assessment escalations in this province. Will you commit to that today, Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Well, this is all a little surreal. What the member opposite is doing is complaining that we're not moving quickly enough to clean up their mess. That's what they're saying. We understand. We accept that they created a mess. There is no question about that.

We very much looked forward to the Ombudsman's report. We now have it in our hands. We look forward to carefully considering it. I think it's important to recognize, as a symbol of how quickly we are prepared to deal with these issues, that the Minister of Finance is going to introduce a bill tomorrow and, with the consent of all parties, we'll be able to delay the period during which appeals can be submitted.

So again, we will work as quickly as we can and do as much as we can to clean up the mess that we inherited.

NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT SUPPLEMENT

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. I'm asking this question on behalf of the 443,000 children living below the poverty line in the province of Ontario.

They want to know why the McGuinty government continues to claw back the federal allowance that's supposed to be going to them. Dalton McGuinty promised to end the clawback. He said, "The clawback is wrong and we will end it." As children's minister, why haven't you represented children properly by insisting that your Premier keep his promise and end the clawback from Ontario's poorest children? Minister, what are you waiting for?

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): I'd like to refer this to the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): The Minister of Children and Youth Services has done an outstanding job of representing the interests of poor children in this province.

First of all, this government raised general welfare rates twice now. That's a first step, and that benefits children in social services. Second of all, we have in fact flowed through the clawback for the years we've been in office—2003, 2004, 2005, 2006—and in this budget we've made that permanent. That is an important step forward, and one that this minister fought very hard and very actively for. We restored the nutrition allowance to mothers in social services. We have allowed social service recipients moving off of welfare to extend their health benefits and take them with them as they move back to employment.

We acknowledge that there is much to do. There will always be more we can do. This government will not rest as long as one child goes to bed hungry in this province.

1520

Ms. Horwath: The bottom line is that Dalton McGuinty promised to end the clawback of the national child benefit and has not yet done it. The federal government sends \$1,450 a year to every poor child and their family. You take that money away from those children and families. I don't know how you can rest with that on your mind. The social action committee of the Ontario Association of Social Workers in Hamilton and district sends you this message: "Hands off." I'm sending it over to the minister by way of this page, Mercedes. Thank you. The postcards are right there and they go to the minister.

You continue to rob those who are least able to fend for themselves, to find food and all of their necessities. Minister, once and for all, when are you going to stop the clawback like your Premier promised?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: This government's initiatives will mean a difference, for a single-parent-led family with two children, of 15.7% over two years. We acknowledge there's more to do. We remain committed to addressing the gap that exists between people in this province, and I don't think there's a better group of people in this House prepared to do that.

Let me remind you of what you did, before you get too sanctimonious. Here's what you did: You increased taxes on low-income Ontarians. That's what you did. You

raised gas taxes 30% under your watch. Shame on you for that. You provided over a doubling of welfare rolls; twice as many children were on welfare when you left office as were on welfare when you came to office.

We have begun to address the challenge of flowing back the national child benefit. We've made permanent the incremental changes that have happened on our watch. We acknowledge there is more to do, Mr. Speaker, and I can tell you that unlike the sanctimony you hear over there, this government is committed to working with the poor and the vulnerable in this society to ensure they share in the great opportunity that all of us have come to share in.

ANIMAL HEALTH LABORATORY

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph–Wellington): My question today is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. My constituents were delighted to learn that our 2006 budget includes \$25 million for the redevelopment of the animal health laboratory at the Ontario Veterinary College in Guelph. It's great news. It's there to increase our capacity to research diseases like avian flu. Veterinary College Dean Elizabeth Stone says, "An improved ability to diagnose infectious diseases will have a great impact on the Canadian agriculture industry." Minister, could you explain how the government's investment of \$25 million for the animal health lab came to be, and how it is going to assist the farmers of Ontario?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I very much appreciate the question, and I appreciate the strong advocacy of the member on behalf of her constituents, but also on behalf of the good work that's done at the University of Guelph. I think it's important to point out that for the last two years the Premier of Ontario has hosted the agri-food summit. At the summit we collect the representative voices from a wide range of folks in the agri-food industry. They have identified why it is so very important that, in Ontario, we have a state-of-the-art facility to deal with animal health. We know there are issues around the world of an international nature, and the member identified avian flu as only one. They have identified, for our government, why it is important that we are proactive, why we make investments in research so that the industry is better prepared to respond should these events happen in our own province and in our own country. I'm very pleased that, by listening to participants in the industry, through the leadership of our Premier, we have seen fit to make the \$25-million announcement that I think is very important.

Mrs. Sandals: As University of Guelph President Alastair Summerlee said, "The new laboratory facilities will be a key component of the strategic plan to place the Ontario Veterinary College at the forefront of improving the health of animals, people and the environment." I agree, and the people of Guelph–Wellington agree that this is a valuable infrastructure investment and that the

health and welfare of our province depend on investments such as this one. Minister, could you elaborate on why such investments are important, not only for the farmers of this province but for all of Ontario?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: Again, I think there probably isn't anything more important to all of us in this room and to all of our constituents than the food we eat every day. We believe, as a government, that it's more than great value; it's absolutely imperative that we make investments in the area of research and innovation to ensure that we continue to have the best and the safest-quality food in Ontario.

I would like to take this opportunity to point out that, over the next five years, our government—our Premier—is prepared to invest \$2.5 million to support those farmers and producers who are prepared to make these kinds of investments to ensure that the food products we eat and the practices on-farm are safe, that we're on the cutting edge. Our Premier has seen fit to establish an award each year to recognize these great people, these forward-thinkers who are making investments—

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

TOURISM

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): My question is for the Premier, and it concerns Ontario's tourism industry.

Today, I had the opportunity of attending and participating in the Tourism Federation of Ontario's annual forum. Last Thursday's budget did not do enough for our tourism industry. The tourism industry was asking for approximately \$30 million to be put towards the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corp. Our tourist industry is facing extraordinary challenges this year because of the high Canadian dollar and of course the pending US border passport issue.

I would ask the Premier, why was the budget not more helpful to Ontario's tourism industry?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): The honourable member opposite will surely understand that I'm about to disagree with him on this particular matter.

The single biggest community that stands as a draw for tourism in Ontario is the province's capital city, the city of Toronto. This city is in the midst of a cultural renaissance. That is coming about in part because our government is partnering with the community. In this budget, we've contributed \$49 million to support capital construction projects for Ontario's major cultural agencies and attractions. I'm talking about the Royal Ontario Museum, the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Canadian Opera House, the National Ballet School, the Royal Conservatory of Music and the Gardiner Museum of Ceramic Art.

If there's any large, urban centre in North America that is doing as much as we are in this particular city to ensure that we all benefit from a growing cultural renaissance, I am not aware of it. We are putting Toronto on the map when it come to culture in North America.

PETITIONS

SPECIAL CARE HOMES

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

“Whereas hundreds of vulnerable adults live in homes for special care that provide them a warm and secure, stable and friendly environment which allows them to lead fulfilling lives; and

“Whereas the alternative for many of these individuals is a life of homelessness on the street; and

“Whereas special care homes have had only a single 3% increase since 1999, which in no way matches the rising costs they face; and

“Whereas the Liberal government promised Ontario in the election they would ‘significantly increase supportive housing options for those suffering from mental illness’;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, call on the government to bring in an immediate increase in funding to homes for special care.”

As I am in complete agreement, I affix my signature.

1530

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): I have a petition signed by friends of the Royal Oak nursing home in Kingsville that reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas long-term-care funding levels are too low to enable homes to provide the care and services our aging seniors and parents, who are residents of long-term-care homes, need, with the respect and dignity that they deserve; and

“Whereas, even with recent funding increases and a dedicated staff who do more than their best, there is still not enough time available to provide the care residents need. For example, 10 minutes, and sometimes less, is simply not enough time to assist a resident to get up, dressed, to the bathroom and then to the dining room for breakfast; and

“Whereas those unacceptable care and service levels are now at risk of declining;

“We, the undersigned, who are members of family councils, residents’ councils and/or supporters of long-term care in Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase operating funding to long-term-care homes by \$306.6 million, which will allow the hiring of more staff to provide an additional 20 minutes of care per resident per day over the next two years (2006 and 2007).”

I present this petition to the Legislature.

ORGAN DONATION

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

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas 1,920 Ontarians are currently on a waiting list for an organ transplant; and

“Whereas the number of Ontarians waiting for an organ transplant has virtually doubled since 1994; and

“Whereas hundreds die every year waiting for an organ transplant; and

“Whereas greater public education and awareness will increase the number of people who sign their organ donor cards and increase the availability of organ transplants for Ontarians; and

“Whereas the private member’s bill proposed by Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees will require every resident 16 years of age and older to complete an organ donation question when applying for or renewing a driver’s licence or provincial health card, thereby increasing public awareness of the importance of organ donation while respecting the right of every person to make a personal decision regarding the important issue of organ donation;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 67, the Organ and Tissue Donation Mandatory Declaration Act, 2006.”

I affix my signature, as I agree with this petition.

COMMUNITY MEDIATION

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly by a number of individuals from Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services in Mississauga. It reads as follows:

“Whereas many types of civil disputes may be resolved through community mediation delivered by trained mediators, who are volunteers working with the parties in the dispute; and

“Whereas Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services established the Peel Community Mediation Service in 1999 with support from the government of Ontario through the Trillium Foundation, the Rotary Club of Mississauga West and the United Way of Peel, and has proven the viability and success of community mediation; and

“Whereas the city of Mississauga and the town of Caledon have endorsed the Peel Community Mediation Service, and law enforcement bodies refer many cases to the Peel Community Mediation Service as an alternative to a court dispute; and

“Whereas court facilities and court time are both scarce and expensive, the cost of community mediation is very small and the extra expense incurred for lack of community mediation in Peel region would be much greater than the small annual cost of funding community mediation;

“Be it therefore resolved that the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of the Attorney General, support and fund the ongoing service delivery of the Peel Community Mediation Service through Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services.”

I’m pleased to join with the petitioners in signing this petition and in asking page Meghan to carry it for me.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a petition that comes from Lakeland Long Term Care in Parry Sound, and it says:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas long-term-care funding levels are too low to enable homes to provide the care and services our aging seniors and parents, who are residents of long-term-care homes, need, with the respect and dignity that they deserve; and

“Whereas, even with recent funding increases and a dedicated staff who do more than their best, there is still not enough time available to provide the care residents need. For example, 10 minutes, and sometimes less, is simply not enough time to assist a resident to get up, dressed, to the bathroom and then to the dining room for breakfast; and

“Whereas those unacceptable care and service levels are now at risk of declining;

“We, the undersigned, who are members of family councils, residents’ councils and/or supporters of long-term care in Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase operating funding to long-term-care homes by \$306.6 million, which will allow the hiring of more staff to provide an additional 20 minutes of care per resident per day over the next two years (2006 and 2007).”

I affix my signature in support of this petition.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): I’m pleased to introduce this petition on behalf of my riding of Niagara Falls, and it reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government of Ontario’s health insurance plan covers treatments for one form of macular degeneration,” known as wet, “and there are other forms of macular degeneration,” known as dry, “that are not covered,

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

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

I’m pleased to sign my signature in support of this petition.

SERVICES FOR THE
DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): 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 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.”

This is signed by staff, families and clients from Community Living Burlington, and it has my signature of support.

SOCIAL SERVICES FUNDING

Mr. Tim Peterson (Mississauga South): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly.

“Whereas the spending on most social services has been frozen since the early 1990s under both the Rae and Harris governments; and

“Whereas the population of the region of Peel has approximately tripled in that time period ...; and

“Whereas demand for services has exploded as a result of population and other social changes;

“It is now noted that the people of the region of Peel receive 50% less funding on a per capita basis than the average provincial per capita funding for social programs....

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

“That the Ministry of Community and Social Services correct this imbalance in their new programs and through the reform of the funding formulae for its old programs within a three-year time frame;

“That the Ministry of Children and Youth Services continue to correct this imbalance in their new programs and introduce fundamental reform of their funding policies to correct this imbalance within the next three years as well.”

I submit this petition and I’m happy to sign it.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford): I’m very pleased to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads as follows:

“Whereas long-term-care funding levels are too low to enable homes to provide the care and services our aging seniors and parents, who are residents of long-term-care

homes, need, with the respect and dignity that they deserve; and

“Whereas, even with recent funding increases and a dedicated staff who do more than their best, there is still not enough time available to provide the care residents need. For example, 10 minutes, and sometimes less, is simply not enough time to assist a resident to get up, dressed, to the bathroom and then to the dining room for breakfast; and

“Whereas those unacceptable care and service levels are now at risk of declining;

“We, the undersigned, who are members of family councils, residents’ councils and/or supporters of long-term care in Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase operating funding to long-term-care homes by \$306.6 million, which will allow the hiring of more staff to provide an additional 20 minutes of care per resident per day over the next two years (2006 and 2007).”

I support the petition and affix my signature.

1540

SPRING BEAR HUNT

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): I have a petition to the government of Ontario and the Ministry of Natural Resources.

“Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources’ own data shows a clear and undeniable connection between the termination of the spring bear hunt and the increase in nuisance bears; and

“Whereas there has been an increase of almost 500% in the number of calls to the Ministry of Natural Resources about nuisance bears but no change in calls in Manitoba, where the spring hunt continues; and

“Whereas at least five people have been attacked by bears in 2005, and since 1998, bears have killed seven people in Ontario, six in provincial parks where hunting is not allowed, and all fatalities have occurred where there is little or no hunting pressure; and

“Whereas adult male bears are cannibals and highly aggressive; there are thousands more adult male bears in the population since the hunt was terminated and thousands more bear cubs are being orphaned or killed; unprecedented numbers of nuisance bears are being trapped, relocated or killed, but the problem persists; and

“Whereas the increase of nuisance bears since the spring bear hunt was cancelled has become a serious threat to public safety, and increasing interaction with humans from higher bear densities is likely to result in more bear attacks on humans; and

“Whereas, during a debate in the Legislative Assembly on November 17, 2005, members of all three official parties supported a return of the spring bear hunt;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we petition the government of Ontario and the Ministry of Natural Resources to, in the interests of public safety and scientific wildlife management, immediately return a spring bear hunt to Ontario.”

This is signed by over 150 constituents in the north.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): “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 us as library users, resulting in delays in how libraries receive new books;

“Therefore, we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Minister of Culture to restore the funding for Ontario public library services so that libraries can continue to promote literacy in our communities.”

As I am in agreement, I’ve affixed my signature and I give this to Trevor.

COMMUNITY MEDIATION

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I have a petition here in support of community mediation which reads:

“Whereas many types of civil disputes may be resolved through community mediation delivered by trained mediators, who are volunteers who work with the parties in the dispute; and

“Whereas Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services established the Peel Community Mediation Service in 1999 with support from the government of Ontario through the Trillium Foundation, the Rotary Club of Mississauga West and the United Way of Peel, and has proven the viability and success of community mediation; and

“Whereas the city of Mississauga and the town of Caledon have endorsed the Peel Community Mediation Service, and law enforcement bodies refer many cases to the Peel Community Mediation Service as an alternative to a court dispute; and

“Whereas court facilities and court time are both scarce and expensive, the cost of community mediation is very small and the extra expense incurred for lack of community mediation in Peel region would be much greater than the small annual cost of funding community mediation;

“Be it therefore resolved that the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of the Attorney General, support and fund the ongoing service delivery of the Peel Community Mediation Service through Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services.”

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I beg to inform the House that, in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, his Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in his office.

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

Bill 21, An Act to enact the Energy Conservation Leadership Act, 2006 and to amend the Electricity Act, 1998, the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998, and the Conservation Authorities Act / Projet de loi 21, Loi édictant la Loi de 2006 sur le leadership en matière de conservation de l'énergie et apportant des modifications à la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité, à la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario et à la Loi sur les offices de protection de la nature.

Bill 36, An Act to provide for the integration of the local system for the delivery of health services / Projet de loi 36, Loi prévoyant l'intégration du système local de prestation des services de santé.

Bill 210, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act and make complementary amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 210, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille et apportant des modifications complémentaires à d'autres lois.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2006 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 27, 2006, on the amendment to the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Further debate?

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): I look forward to this day. I always look forward to responding to McGuinty government budgets, because it's where we get to see how many promises they didn't keep this year. So, once again, much of what I have to say will deal with broken promises—promises that were made by the McGuinty government oh so solemnly, with such sanctimony; and now, a couple of years after they were made, we see those very promises going up in smoke.

The first promise I want to deal with is the promise made by Dalton McGuinty that the McGuinty government would do away with any move towards the privatization of hospitals in any way. You'll remember that Dalton McGuinty used to be very critical of the former Conservative government when they put forward the concept of private financing of hospitals. In fact, I think I can quote the now Premier. He said that he was opposed to private financing concepts of hospitals because private financing would cost the public more, that Ministry of Health funding would be diverted from patients to corporate profits, and that this was leading us down the road to creeping privatization, creeping Americanization of our health care system. He vowed at the time that he would put an end to any private financing of hospitals and any concepts of private financing of hospitals.

But what do we see in this budget, attached to this budget? The Dalton McGuinty who promised to stop private hospitals, private financing initiatives of hospitals, because they cost more and deliver less, has announced in this budget plans to increase the number of private financing hospitals in Ontario by 1,200%. The number of private hospitals, private financings of hospitals, will go from two that were going to be established under the Conservatives to 25 under the McGuinty government. This budget announces that 11 requests for proposals will be released over the next year, and other communities won't be seeing new hospitals for a very long time thanks to the slow pace of the private financing process.

I just want to again inform people at home of just how this private financing works. An economic analysis of the Brampton private financing hospital concept shows that it will end up costing the health budget \$175 million more for a private financing hospital than a publicly financed hospital. Why? Because the private corporation that is going to do the private financing scheme wants at least a 15% profit—20%, if they can get it. So that will add to the cost. That will be money diverted away from patient care towards corporate profits. But in addition, the private financing entity will have to pay interest rates of 8% or 9% when the government could get an interest rate of 5% itself. To give people at home an example of what a bad idea this is, if you bought a new home and you were going to take out a \$200,000 mortgage, and the credit union would give you personally a 5% interest rate, why would you go to a Bay Street private financing corporation and have them borrow the money at 8%? On \$200,000 borrowed, the difference between a 5% interest rate that you could get yourself and an 8% interest rate that the Bay Street corporation would give you, that amount of money borrowed over 20 years would mean literally tens of thousands of dollars of extra interest you'd have to pay. Then you'd have to pay them 20% for their profit figure on top of that. I think any person would say that's a bad deal.

1550

But that's exactly what the McGuinty government is doing now with our hospital system: moving to private financing corporations on Bay Street that are going to charge 8% and 9% interest, and as a result hundreds of millions of dollars of the health budget that should be going to pay for patient care instead are going to be diverted into corporate profits by the McGuinty government. This from a government that said it was going to protect and sustain medicare; this from a government that said it was opposed to any privatization of the hospital system, any Americanization of the hospital system. Yet that's exactly what we see.

The other example of this broken promise in the budget is how this budget relates to the government's local health initiatives network. There's nothing local about them. This is about the Minister of Health literally telling local hospitals what they can spend, what they can spend it on, what services they can provide and what

services they can't provide. And it's about the Minister of Health telling hospitals that they must privatize health services.

In fact, I was just speaking to my colleague Mr. Runciman, who was telling me that the Minister of Health has informed the hospital in his hometown of Brockville that they must take a number of services currently being offered within the hospital and turn them over to private corporations. So for things like food services, housekeeping, maintenance, cleaning and care-taking, the McGuinty government is already ordering the privatization of those services and putting those services out to cutthroat bidding. We know what that means: Those dedicated hospital workers who have kept the hospital clean, who have provided safe and good, nutritious food, are being told that they no longer have a job. These services are going to be turned over to a private corporation, and the private corporation is in turn going to say to the workers, "You do this work for minimum wage." Let me tell you, this is not going to be good for the cleanliness and the health and safety of the hospitals, it's not going to be good for the quality or the nutrition of the food and it's not going to be good for those dedicated hospital workers who are now going to be paid much less for doing important work. But once again we see this broken promise of the McGuinty government and once again we see their shallow and hollow commitment to our medicare system and to a quality hospital system. This is what we're going to see, and that's what will be demonstrated in this broken promise in the budget.

I next want to talk a bit about education and tuition. I remember a Dalton McGuinty who said that tuition fees at universities and colleges were already too high and he was going to freeze tuition fees. What do we see in the announcement that is part of this budget? Contrary to their promise, the McGuinty government is going to increase university and college fees significantly. That means taking more money out of the pockets of students who are already hard-pressed. It means that students who come from modest-income and lower-income families are going to have a very difficult time. The McGuinty government's answer to those students is, "Take on more debt." Ontario university and college students already carry the highest levels of debt of any students in the country. But once again, this broken promise by the McGuinty government: There's not going to be a freeze in tuition fees; there's going to be an increase. What does this mean? It means that since 1994 tuition in Ontario has increased by 125%, to become one of the highest-tuition rate provinces in Canada. In the same period, student debt has doubled. Student debt now stands at an average of over \$22,000. A student will have to pay \$300 a month over the next 10 years to pay down their loan. So a student graduating at age 24 will have a scenario where they'll be paying down their student debt until age 34 as a result of the tuition increases of the McGuinty government. A further 5% increase in undergraduate tuition will put tuition at almost \$5,500 by 2007—again, a \$500 increase.

It would have cost the McGuinty government only \$150 million to extend the tuition freeze through this year. The McGuinty government, which had a \$3-billion revenue windfall last year, after promising students that it would freeze tuition, would not come up with the \$150 million out of that \$3-billion windfall to freeze tuition.

Graduate programs will see even steeper increases of up to 8% a year in tuition fees. This means that a program like medicine at the University of Toronto will see tuition of over \$20,000 a year very soon. There's already evidence that shows that students coming from modest-income families, even middle-income families, students who have all of the academic ability and academic preparation, are now not going on to medical school simply because they cannot afford \$20,000 a year in tuition fees. That was the evidence before the McGuinty government came to power, and it's increasingly evident now that the McGuinty government has chosen to increase tuition fees even more.

But it's not just university and college students; apprentices aren't seeing any relief either. The McGuinty government has broken its promise to scrap the Conservative government's imposed classroom fee for apprentices. Other provinces have frozen these fees or done away with them. The McGuinty government continues these user fees on apprentices, even after Dalton McGuinty promised to eliminate them.

I just want to say few words about elementary and secondary schools. This government tries to promote itself as an education government, but what we find when we look at the budget is that the increases to the education budget are about half of the \$824 million that school boards actually need to meet their increased costs. In fact, increases to grants for student needs are routinely being raided by school boards to provide for costs like heating and keeping the lights on. The McGuinty government hasn't provided an increase to cover heating costs since 1997. We all know how much the cost of natural gas has gone up, how much the cost of heating oil has gone up, how much the McGuinty government has driven hydro rates higher, and yet there is nothing in this budget, nothing from the McGuinty government to cover those costs, so that budget money that's supposed to be allocated to student needs, like textbooks and learning materials, is being raided to cover heating and electricity costs.

Last year, the Toronto school board, for example, spent half their budget for English as a second language to cover heating costs. Imagine that. With the pressing need for more English-as-a-second-language services, in the Toronto school board they were forced to spend half of their English-as-a-second-language budget just to cover heating costs, because the McGuinty government hasn't improved and updated the school funding formula as they promised.

I want to spend just a few minutes talking about the energy issue. I remember when Dalton McGuinty stared into the camera and said that he was going to freeze electricity rates until 2006. What do we see? We see that

electricity rates have skyrocketed. We see, from the information that was just received today, that there is likely to be a further 11% increase in hydroelectricity rates this spring under the McGuinty government. Why is this happening? It's happening for a number of reasons. Because the McGuinty government wants to pursue a scheme for \$40 billion in new, expensive, unreliable nuclear power plants, and the McGuinty government wants to further privatize electricity supply—both of those things. The privatization will add 20% to the hydro bill long-term, and going down the road of expensive, unreliable nuclear power will increase consumers' hydroelectricity bills in a way that is not sustainable.

1600

This is already having a dramatic impact on jobs in the province. We have seen the loss of 100,000 manufacturing jobs in Ontario over the last year, and in many of those cases companies are very blunt about what's happening. In the pulp sector, in the paper sector, in the tire-making sector, in the steel sector, where they've shed jobs, companies have come forward and simply said, "Look, these incredible electricity rate increases make it very difficult for us to sustain operations in Ontario, so we're closing down and laying off workers."

In fact, what is happening across northern and central Ontario is that pulp and paper companies are shutting down their operations and moving production to provinces like Quebec, British Columbia, Manitoba—or even to some American states—because companies are finding that under the McGuinty government their hydro bill for their paper mill, their pulp mill, is now two and a half or three times what they would be paying in other provinces. As we know, the manufacturing process utilizes a lot of electricity, and so they simply cannot afford to continue production in Ontario under the sky-high electricity rate increases of the McGuinty government. What this essentially means is that Ontario is exporting good-paying manufacturing jobs from Ontario communities to communities in Quebec, British Columbia, Michigan, Wisconsin or Minnesota. This didn't have to happen. It's happening as a result of the wrong-headed hydroelectricity policies of the McGuinty government.

Many manufacturers in this province are calling for a more rational, more thoughtful and more sustainable hydroelectricity policy from this government. They were hoping for some evidence of it in this budget. What did they find? No rational, thoughtful, sustainable electricity policy; just another 11% increase, which is going to kill more jobs, make it more difficult for manufacturers, make it more difficult for small business, make it more difficult for farmers and make it more difficult for modest-, middle- and lower-income families in this province.

I think people were hoping to see, in conjunction with this budget, some action on energy efficiency and energy conservation. After all, energy efficiency and energy conservation are cheaper than building \$40 billion in new nuclear plants and are also better for the environment. But once again, no action on that front either.

Finally, there were a number of municipalities—large municipalities and small municipalities—that wanted to see some response from the McGuinty government with respect to the issue of provincial downloading. We know that under the former Conservative government they began to download the costs of policing, the costs of social assistance, the costs of seniors' housing, the costs of child care and the costs of many health matters as well. In opposition, Dalton McGuinty said that this downloading was wrong and he said he would reverse it. What we're seeing is in fact that the downloading is increasing under the McGuinty government. Downloading is getting worse. We saw Mayor David Miller of Toronto point out that because the McGuinty government doesn't pay their own bills, the city of Toronto had to fork over \$300 million to pay bills on services that are really provincial services. So the McGuinty government has failed to reverse the downloading that started under the former Conservative government; in fact, they've made the downloading worse.

There were a lot of municipalities—rural municipalities, northern municipalities, large urban municipalities—that wanted to see in this budget some steps taken to start to reverse the downloading. After all, the McGuinty government had \$3 billion in windfall revenue in the past 12 months that they could have used to start to reverse and redress the downloading. The budget numbers show that they're going to have even more tax revenue than that in the 12 months going forward that they could have used to redress and start to reverse the downloading by the province onto municipalities. But once again, the McGuinty government refused to do that, and in refusing to do that, they have broken yet another promise.

I think that municipality after municipality ought to take note of this. In fact, if I were to describe this budget, I would describe it as the McGuinty attempt to purchase another by-election—in this case, the McGuinty attempt to purchase the Toronto–Danforth by-election. Even people from Toronto, if they look at this budget, are going to find that, yes, there was \$1 billion and something put into a trust fund—I prefer to think of it more as a slush fund. That's how the federal Auditor General described these kinds of trust funds. They're completely unaccountable and they very quickly become slush funds. The McGuinty government is putting this money into a \$1 billion-plus slush fund, with no schedule whatsoever for the building of new transit; no blueprint, no schedule—nothing. So the people of Toronto, the people of the greater Toronto area, are not going to see any of this money any time soon either. Actually, though, they may see it in the two- or three-month run-up to the next provincial election. That's what I mean. Instead of the McGuinty government addressing the real needs in terms of downloading or the plight of farmers or the plight of students who are facing tuition hikes, the McGuinty government didn't do any of that. They literally took much of the \$3-billion revenue windfall and put it into their pre-election slush fund. Mark my words: You'll see how

this slush fund is going to be used in the three- or four-month run-up to the next election.

The next issue I want to raise—and it's related in part to the downloading and also in part to energy costs—is the issue of the loss of so many jobs. Between June 2004 and January 2006, Ontario lost 12% of its manufacturing. Many people out there—academics and economists—are saying: “It's time for Ontario to put together a job strategy. It's time for Ontario to respond to this. Don't just sit there and watch the loss of thousands of manufacturing jobs, and don't do anything to increase the loss of thousands of manufacturing jobs.” People were calling for a job strategy from the McGuinty government in this budget. Is there any job strategy? None. Only one new manufacturing initiative was announced, an incentive to supposedly encourage hybrid vehicles in Ontario.

What Ontario needs and what wasn't announced in the budget is an end to skyrocketing electricity rates, improved severance, advance notice, a greater onus on employers to justify mass layoffs and closures, and a one-stop shop providing assistance in job-loss restructuring situations. We are losing jobs unnecessarily. We are losing manufacturing operations and manufacturing plants that could be sustained if this government had a job strategy, if this government was willing to use some of that \$3-billion revenue windfall in a positive way. But no, the McGuinty government isn't prepared to do that. They want to use most of their revenue windfall to protect their political hides and to create an electoral slush fund rather than looking after the legitimate needs of Ontario's workers.

1610

In connection with that, I want to talk for a minute about the crisis we see on our farms. The McGuinty government wants you to believe that the BSE crisis is over. The McGuinty government wants you to believe that all of those farmers, whether they raised beef, whether they ran heifer operations or whether they ran cow-calf operations, that's all over with and those farmers are doing well. Nothing could be further from the truth. Literally tens of thousands of farmers, whether they be in cow-calf, whether they be actual beef producers, whether they be in heifer production for milk cows, are just as hard-pressed as ever. They were hoping to see something in this budget that would make a difference for them, something that would allow them to obtain some sustainable financing so they could rebuild the equity in their farm operations. Anything in this budget? Nothing at all.

Similarly, grains and oilseeds producers—I'm talking here about people who might grow corn, grain or even soya beans—were hoping they would see something in this budget in terms of a longer-term risk management strategy; they wanted to see a risk management plan. Quebec has a risk management plan for their grain and oilseed farmers. Alberta has a risk management strategy for their grain and oilseed farmers. Manitoba has put measures in place to help their grain and oilseed farmers

that are quite positive. Farmers were hoping they would see something here from the McGuinty government, given the McGuinty government's \$3-billion revenue windfall. Did the farmers see anything? No; farmers left here very disappointed and very frustrated. It's as if the McGuinty government doesn't care if tens of thousands of farm families lose their livelihoods, lose their farming operations. It's as if the McGuinty government is more concerned with saving their own political skin and using much of their \$3-billion revenue windfall to set up their pre-election political slush fund than they are with working with farmers to create a risk management strategy.

I want to be clear. Farmers are not asking for a hand-out. They're not asking for a \$100-million announcement from the McGuinty government tomorrow or next week. What farmers are saying is, “It is risky now to be in farming. Because of the American subsidies of their grain and oilseed farmers, because of the aftermath of the BSE crisis, it is very risky to be in farming.” Conditions will improve over time, but what farmers need is the McGuinty government and the federal government to come to the table with them, to engage and to create a risk management strategy so that the risk can be shared. What did they get from the McGuinty government in this budget? They got the back of the hand; no risk management strategy whatsoever.

I also want to raise an issue the McGuinty government talks about a lot but doesn't do anything about. The McGuinty government talks about welcoming new Canadians to the Ontario economy. It talks about working with new Canadians so they can find a place in the Ontario economy and help grow prosperity in this province. They talk a lot, but they don't do anything.

Let me give you an example. It's very clear that if new Canadians are to be able to take their place in the Ontario economy, one of the things they will need is access to English-as-a-second-language services. In fact, what we know is that the need for more English-as-a-second-language services is growing at a dramatic rate. The McGuinty government promised to give schools the resources needed to provide high-quality English-as-a-second-language instruction, but they haven't delivered. Forty per cent of Toronto schools that have students with English-as-a-second-language needs don't have English-as-a-second-language teachers—an increase of 16% since 1999. Despite the McGuinty government's promises, the situation is actually getting worse. Was there anything in this budget to address that? No; nothing; nada. This is as a result of the overall education funding shortfall. About half of the Toronto District School Board's English-as-a-second-language budget was raided last year to pay for school heating costs because the McGuinty government hasn't updated and improved the funding formula for our schools, as they promised.

Also on this front, the government is going to cut and privatize services provided by the Ontario Human Rights Commission. I don't need to tell you how important the human rights commission is to new Canadians. The Ontario Human Rights Commission provides new Can-

adians and other minorities with protection from discrimination. However, the McGuinty government has decided to undermine that protection with the McGuinty government's plan to eliminate investigation services at the Ontario Human Rights Commission and to basically say to people, "If you want to have your human rights complaint investigated, you should find a lawyer and pay for that lawyer yourself." It's the privatization of human rights commission services. This is going to undermine human rights protection in this province in a very serious way.

A final issue that is very important to new Canadians is the recognition of credentials and academic achievement obtained outside of Ontario. Dalton McGuinty promised to eliminate, within the first year of the McGuinty government, barriers preventing foreign-trained professionals from practising their professions. Now into the third year of the McGuinty government, we are still waiting, and this budget continues this pattern of neglect—no new funding for bridge training and no commitment to get tough with professional organizations that are shutting foreign-trained professionals out; no assistance to mitigate the high cost of getting accreditation, either.

I want to also address the issue of child care because, you know what? Boy, the McGuinty government has a lot to say about child care. They talk about child care, they talk about child care, they talk about child care. What did we see with respect to child care in this budget? What we see is the McGuinty government actually cutting child care funding in this budget—a \$186-million cut to child care funding. That translates into a 22% reduction in child care funding in this province at a time when the McGuinty government had a \$3-billion revenue surplus last year, and the figures show they're going to have an even bigger revenue surplus in the year going forward. What are they doing? They're cutting child care funding for our kids. But you know what? It's worse than that, because Dalton McGuinty promised that not only wouldn't he cut child care, but to invest an additional \$300 million of provincial money in child care. No \$300-million investment; instead, a \$186-million cut—almost a \$500-million difference between what they're doing and what they promised.

Then there's the issue of the clawback of the national child benefit supplement. I don't think there were too many issues that Dalton McGuinty was more sanctimonious on than this issue. When the Conservative government announced they were going to claw back the national child benefit supplement, Dalton McGuinty said that was morally wrong. He said it was morally wrong and he said a McGuinty government would end it.

1620

Well, here we are into the third year of the McGuinty government, with literally one in six children in the province living in poverty, with not tens of thousands but hundreds of thousands of Ontario children living in poverty. The McGuinty government has \$3 billion of surplus revenue, windfall revenue. It would cost only

\$220 million to stop taking, to stop clawing back, money from the poorest kids in the province. Did the McGuinty government do that? No. Suddenly that sanctimonious promise doesn't matter anymore. Suddenly that sanctimonious, "This is morally wrong, and a McGuinty government will end it," is not important anymore.

I just want people to know what is really going on here. This is the equivalent of the family allowance. The federal government used to provide a family allowance to families so they'd have the extra money to purchase a new pair of shoes for their kids, to purchase maybe a new jacket for them before winter, or mitts and a toque, or maybe a new pair of boots or running shoes. I remember that in my family, that's what my mother used the family allowance for. When the family allowance cheque came in, that meant that maybe I was going to get a new pair of pants or maybe a new jacket or a new pair of running shoes. That's what families use this for.

This is for lower- and modest-income families. This is very necessary money. It means the difference between children having clothes on their backs and not having clothes on their backs. For most families it's \$1,500 a year for a child, and for two children it comes out to about \$2,700 a year. The McGuinty government continues to take that money from the poorest kids in this province. At a time when the McGuinty government has had a \$3-billion revenue windfall, they continue to take money from the poorest kids in this province. That is shameful and disgusting—

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): And immoral.

Mr. Hampton: —and immoral, yet the McGuinty government continues to do it.

It doesn't end there. As I pointed out before the last election, Dalton McGuinty sent letters and e-mails to literally tens of thousands of parents who have children afflicted with autism, parents who are very desperate to get their kids one-on-one intensive counselling so that the children can start to overcome this affliction of autism.

Dalton McGuinty wrote to those parents and e-mailed them and said that the policy of the former Conservative government to end IBI treatment, to end intensive behavioural counselling, at age six was wrong and that the McGuinty government would end it. Here we have the McGuinty government, again with the \$3-billion windfall tax revenues, and did they end the discrimination against autistic children? No, they didn't do that either.

Finally, I just want to raise some issues that are unique to my part of the province, the part of the province where I grew up, where I live and that I'm very proud of: northern Ontario.

I looked at the \$1 billion-plus that the McGuinty government is putting into their pre-election slush fund, and I looked at the amount of money they were showering around the greater Toronto area to try to purchase the Toronto-Danforth by-election. Then I looked at the needs of northern Ontario. What about those hard-pressed communities in northern Ontario where they've seen literally thousands of jobs lost as a result of the irrational McGuinty government policy of driving elec-

tricity rates through the roof, which has killed pulp mill and paper mill after pulp mill and paper mill? What was in the budget to help those communities and to help those workers?

In short, there was virtually nothing. The government says, "Oh, we're going to spend \$400 million on bridges and roads," but that's \$400 million spread between all the rural municipalities and small towns in southern Ontario and all the municipalities and small towns in northern Ontario. That works out to maybe \$100,000 for this municipality, maybe a couple of hundred thousand dollars for that municipality. And it's one-time money. It's not going to reverse the downloading. It's not going to replace the thousands of good-paying jobs that were lost. It's not going to replace the millions of dollars that were lost in property tax assessment. It's not going to do anything like that.

Just to give two examples, two communities I'm aware of in particular. The community of Pickle Lake, a small community of only 350 people: Do you know what the McGuinty government did to the community of Pickle Lake this spring? They increased their policing costs. Get this. For 350 people, they increased their policing costs by \$587,000; 350 people, about 100 homes, are going to be hit with a policing download of \$587,000. Do you know what it amounts to? It amounts to a \$2,000 increase in the property tax bill just to cover the McGuinty download. The community of Sioux Lookout, very similar: People in Sioux Lookout are being hit with a \$1,200 property tax increase to pay for the downloading of policing services in that community. This is repeated all over northern Ontario.

I have a new name for the Ontario Provincial Police. They're not the Ontario Provincial Police anymore; they're the Dalton McGuinty police download. That's what we should be calling them across the province: the Dalton McGuinty downloaded police service, because they certainly aren't a provincial police service anymore; the McGuinty government doesn't pay for them. Municipalities and municipal taxpayers are having to pay the full load because of the McGuinty government download. I was hoping we would see something to address this. Was there anything to address that downloading? Nothing.

But it gets worse. In communities that have lost their paper mill or their pulp mill, one place they might be able to turn to in terms of helping to buttress their economy would be tourism. As you know, across northern Ontario there are thousands of lakes, beautiful scenery and forests, and good fishing and hunting and birdwatching—all kinds of wilderness tourism opportunities. People were hoping they'd see some investment in tourism. But do you know what happened on the tourism front? A \$100-million cut to the tourism budget. It's as if the McGuinty government isn't satisfied with putting the boot to the pulp and paper industry in northern Ontario; they want to take the knife to the tourism sector as well.

Similarly with aboriginal affairs: At a time when the Kashechewan crisis shows that we have pressing needs in our First Nations and that aboriginal people are facing

more and more inequality all the time, I was hoping we'd see perhaps an increase in the aboriginal affairs budget. But no, what we see is a \$28-million or 57% cut to the ministry responsible for aboriginal affairs under the McGuinty government. The Ministry of Transportation, which has important work to do in northern Ontario, is seeing a \$265-million or 12% cut. The Ministry of Northern Development, which is important for northern transportation and services to northern municipalities, is taking a \$10-million or 7% cut.

I say to all those people across northern Ontario, you know what? I think the McGuinty government has it figured out this way. The McGuinty government thinks that they can shut down your pulp mills and your paper mills, that they can chop \$100 million out of the tourism budget, that they can cut the aboriginal affairs budget by 57%, that they can cut the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines budget by 7%, that they can cut all these services that are important to northern Ontario, and yet the McGuinty government thinks you will still vote for them.

1630

I say to the people of northern Ontario, don't be taken in again. When the McGuinty government has over \$1 billion for a pre-election slush fund that they want to shower around the greater Toronto area and when the McGuinty government can use some of their \$3 billion of revenue surplus to try to purchase a by-election in the greater Toronto area, it's pretty clear: The McGuinty government is taking people of northern and rural Ontario communities for granted, and the McGuinty government deserves to hear from mayors and reeves and councillors in northern Ontario and mayors and reeves and councillors of rural Ontario for such a budget that was so unfair, that so obviously failed to respond to the real needs of real people across Ontario. For that, this budget deserves to be condemned. For that, this budget deserves the criticism and the ridicule that it is receiving across northern and rural Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge): It gives me pleasure to enter into the debate today. This is my first opportunity in my role as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance to debate in the House and in committee.

To start, though, if I can, I've listened intently over the past couple of days to the leader of the official opposition and the leader of the third party. From my experience in municipal governance and even here, I understand what reserve funds are: Setting money aside so that for very specific kinds of areas you'll have the resource to do the certain work necessary. I understand the idea of rate stabilization funds. Those were funds that often municipally would allow you to take out the bumps in the system. I understand the concept of setting up a trust fund that establishes on a go-forward basis the opportunity, when partners come together, to undertake substantive initiatives.

I'm somewhat dismayed, though, that on repeated occasions, both the leader of the official opposition and the leader of the third party would constantly refer to the words "slush fund." As a matter of fact, I think probably at another time that may have been raised as a matter considered to be something unparliamentary within this Legislature. So I hope that as we go forward, people can speak to it, whether it's trust funds or reserve funds or other strategies for financial stability, and avoid the rather trite type of referrals to money that would otherwise be used in a somewhat inappropriate fashion.

I want to talk to the budget in the context of our business plan. Budgets are not one-off situations. Businesses and governments don't plan on one-off annual opportunities. They plan in a fashion that allows for a plan of action over a period of time. In the government's case, in our case, it's a four-year plan, because we know exactly the length of our term of office, with a fixed election date in October 2007. Thus, we set out when we took office to plan accordingly during that period of time.

We didn't only inherit from the former government a massive fiscal deficit of some \$5.5 billion; we inherited a health care deficit, an education and skills training deficit, and an infrastructure deficit. So we've set out during the mandate to deal with the health care deficit, and during our first budget focused very clearly on that as the centrepiece, the core, of that budget initiative.

In our second budget, we focused clearly on education and skills, post-secondary opportunities, through the Reaching Higher plan, a \$6.2-billion commitment over five years to the future of this province, to the necessary training and growth that will go on in that regard, to the establishment of some 75,000 new spaces, new opportunities for young people and adults, either for their first post-secondary-related learning or through lifelong learning strategies, and focused on things like additional student aid for those who are the most disadvantaged in our communities.

This is the third in a four-part budgetary and planning strategy. This year we have chosen to focus our attention on the infrastructure deficit. That particular deficit is one that needs the attention of government. It is one that has been recognized nationally by national and provincial leaders. It's one that has been recognized internationally as a deficit in Canada that diminishes our opportunity to attract investment to this country and grow this economy.

That's why we've announced Move Ontario, a new \$1.2-billion investment in public transit, in municipal roads and bridges. The centerpiece of Move Ontario is an \$838-million investment to enable the expansion and modernization of public transit in the greater Toronto area. It is sorely needed and has been sadly neglected. This will include a new subway into York region, crossing boundaries from 416 to 905 for the first time in our history, and new projects that will help to fight gridlock and speed travel across large and mature municipalities such as Brampton and Mississauga.

We're fulfilling a commitment that we started out on when we came to office to provide two cents a litre of

gas tax to municipalities. In the very first budget, as part of the plan there was a one-cent commitment. Last year, we followed that up with half a cent, and this October the final instalment of that two cents a litre will be provided to municipalities for transit purposes in communities throughout Ontario.

Not only have we fulfilled that commitment to municipalities on a key agenda, but we've changed the way that the monies can be used by municipalities. We understood from them that there was a need initially for capital investment, but we also heard clearly that they needed flexibility. That flexibility was to allow them to use it for operating costs as well. So in this budget we've included the additional half cent for the full two cents a litre of gas tax as well as expanded the capacity to use that not only for capital costs but also for operations.

I can only hope that our federal partners, who also understand the need of transit and transportation, will visit the earlier commitment to staging up to five cents a litre in gas tax from federal revenues. This new government will have to undertake a review of that, but I think it is incumbent upon us on all sides of the House to encourage that partnership such that it's a true partnership among all the participants, municipally, provincially and federally.

Through the ReNew Ontario plan, the government will provide a total of some \$3.4 billion to improve our highway network in southern Ontario, and \$1.8 billion for highways in northern Ontario. Not only that, but on a one-time basis only, one-time funding only—and those cheques are going out as quickly as the bureaucracy can turn them around for municipalities as they prepare for their current budgets and their current build year—some \$400 million to some 428 municipalities across Ontario, with special emphasis on small and rural municipalities.

Let me give you an example, if I could, from my own community. In the city of Pickering, that will mean some \$1.85 million. In the neighbouring municipality of Ajax, of which I represent part, it will be some \$1.57 million, and in Durham region, on a regional scale, it will be an additional \$10.77 million. In the rural and small municipalities—my riding has not only part of Pickering and Ajax, which are relatively urban in a suburban context, but also Uxbridge, which is principally rural. The population in Pickering and Ajax is in the range of 95,000 people. Uxbridge's population is probably somewhere around 16,000 or 17,000, so about a fifth. Yet the contribution for upgrading roads and bridges in Uxbridge will be some \$560,000, roughly a third of what those larger municipalities are getting. So it's a clear indication that there is funding in an enhanced fashion for rural and northern municipalities throughout Ontario.

1640

We're also moving forward on some very important initiatives to the economy of this province, and that's funding, with the federal government's engagement, of over \$300 million in the Windsor gateway and some \$323 million in investment in the Niagara and Sarnia crossings. This is a business imperative. In my commun-

ity, the broader community of Durham region, General Motors is very important. The likes of General Motors and others in this province understand how important it is that our border crossings work effectively. We certainly have to have the security that comes with borders, but we also need the capacity to move goods and services as well as people across those borders in an efficient and effective way. These do require major investments. Any of us who travel to the United States, whether for business or pleasure, know the constraints. We know the time it takes. We can see the long lines of trucks trying to move across those borders, not only bringing goods that we might need a week or a month from now, but bringing goods that we need in a matter of hours to ensure that the assembly lines continue to function. Without the capacity to move people across those borders, to move services and goods across those borders effectively, it impacts significantly on our economic health.

Through the initiatives of Move Ontario and ReNew Ontario, and our electricity agenda, we'll create some 500,000 jobs by 2012. That's part of that long-range planning strategy.

I want to speak just for a moment on the health initiatives. Our first budget focused clearly on health as the centrepiece but it didn't stop there; it began there. Each year in these key agendas we are investing more and more in Ontarians, and we're investing more and more in the health of Ontarians even as we transform the system to ensure that the services are quicker, better and more effective and efficient.

The government has led the fight to prevent illness, including a ban on smoking in all enclosed public spaces and workspaces and providing over two million childhood vaccines free of charge. This is all part of the earlier strategy and we have much more to do. In this budget it was announced that Ontario will now help families with children living with type 1 diabetes by funding insulin pumps and related supplies for some 6,500 children. Interestingly, it's a matter that was brought forward and debated on multiple occasions as a private member's bill. It's one of those types of initiatives in this Legislature, apart from government, that individual members in a private member's fashion have the opportunity to bring forward, with the support of their colleagues, and see it come into law and support the health of young people in Ontario.

We're planning for things like an influenza pandemic, like the avian flu. We've put in place 100 of the 150 family health teams that we've committed to during the mandate. We're training some 200 international medical graduates each and every year to relieve the strains and stresses we have on the capacity for Ontarians to get access to medical care from family practitioners. We'll be creating over 100 new undergraduate medical spaces, and not necessarily in the traditional places we think of but in Mississauga, Kitchener-Waterloo, St. Catharines and Windsor. We're expanding the opportunities, for young people who have an interest in medicine, who have the capacity to fulfill that type of intense learning environment, closer to home. They may not need to have

the many thousands of dollars necessary to live in residence or live off-campus; they may be able to live right at home.

Wait times are down in many cases, in many areas, for many of the types of things we have been talking about, whether it's cataracts, cardiac surgery or hip and knee replacements. We're investing through tenders and/or RFPs, depending on the financial structure put in place, in major new hospitals across the province, in communities like Belleville, in communities like my own in Ajax-Pickering, and in London, Mississauga, Toronto, Sarnia, Hamilton, Sudbury and Sault Ste. Marie. That's just this year's budget; that's not what we've already done. That's not the Bramptons, the Peterboroughs and others that are already in place. And it's not the end, because there certainly is more to do.

I could probably spend considerably more time on this budget. There are just too many good things happening in Ontario to be able to cover in a very short period of time. I just wanted to highlight a few key areas and to acknowledge this as part of a four-year business plan, not a one-off budget situation.

As we move into the fourth and final year of this mandate, we'll continue the good work we have been doing in an effort to ensure that we fulfill our obligations to the people of Ontario, that the economy remains strong, that people are healthier and have more opportunities for education, and that we are well positioned on a go-forward basis to do yet more in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): It's my pleasure to have the opportunity to add some comments to the speech from the member for Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge, who has been speaking about the budget motion.

The budget, of course, came down last Thursday. He referred to the comments of the leader of the third party and of the opposition leader about the billion dollars that they call a reserve fund and that we call a slush fund. The worst thing about this budget is the creative accounting involved and the lengths to which the government has had to go to to make sure the budget is not balanced. I'm sure they have some scheme as to why they want to make sure the budget is not balanced, and I'm sure it has probably got a political bent to it. But we have to look back at this year and realize that the government, from the plan they had a year ago, received an extra \$3 billion in revenue. In just the last few years, we've seen revenues go from some \$68 billion to, I believe, \$85.7 billion that's predicted this year, a \$17-billion increase in revenue, and yet still this government is not balancing the budget.

Over the term of this government, we're going to see the debt of the province increase by some \$10 billion. The forecast in the budget for interest charges, for the next year that we will start on April 1, is \$9.4 billion. That's what we'll be spending on interest, money we won't be spending assisting farmers, improving the

health care system or investing in tourism marketing. I think that's a real shame and I think that in relatively good times, when we have extra money, it's absolutely irresponsible to put forward a budget that you don't balance under these conditions.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): Little ol' me. Here I am. I get to respond to the honourable member's discourse, as it might be, when it comes to his thoughts on the provincial budget. Now, I am not surprised. He is a member of the governing caucus, of course. He's going to get up and praise the budget, and you're not going to be surprised that I'm going to get up and say some bad things about the budget. But I'm going to try to be a little bit fair. Every budget has good and bad; I don't care who the government is. Governments make decisions about how they're going to spend the dollars that are collected by the province of Ontario. If it's an NDP government, a Liberal government or a Conservative government, there are going to be some good things in a budget and there are going to be some bad things in the budget.

1650

I've got to say, from my perspective where I live in northern Ontario, it's not a very good budget. The government says that it's investing in people. Well, I look at what's happening in northeastern and northwestern Ontario, and the forestry sector is being decimated. They had a \$3-billion surplus they tried to figure out how to spend. They said, "We're going to put some of it in infrastructure." I support that. I think spending dollars on infrastructure is a good thing. It's something we have to do as a government, making sure that our roads and bridges, our hospitals and other public facilities are kept up. I don't have an argument with that. But I'm saying that I sat there and watched the budget and what I saw was, over 85% to 90% of the dollars of the Ministry of Transportation being spent in a very condensed geographic area around the city of Toronto: Brampton, Mississauga, Toronto and others. Now, am I opposed to subway extensions? Of course not. I was a member of a government that did the largest subway extension in the history of Ontario. However, I say that there are investments we can be doing across this province, and it seems to me that the government loaded its investments and skewed them against northern Ontario.

The other issue is the whole issue of how it affects children. He talked about the health of children. My God. Your government can end the clawback and put dollars in the pockets of parents so they can feed their kids so they don't go to bed hungry at night.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I'm privileged to have an opportunity to comment briefly on the remarks made by the member from Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge. I just wanted to say simply that the budget we heard last Thursday had a lot of good news in it and a lot of good things for all parts of Ontario.

I wanted in this brief minute or so to talk a little bit about some of the things in Scarborough. For a long time,

we have asked for and have pushed hard for a subway in Scarborough, and I'm glad to see that in Scarborough \$1 million is being allocated or set aside for an environmental assessment, or an EA, to be done. This is the first step towards bringing in a subway system in Scarborough. I think that's good news for the residents there. Previously, the transportation minister did bring an additional platform at the tracks at Kennedy station for the GO station there, which was good. I think this additional step of allowing the environmental assessment will eventually bring to fruition a subway system in Scarborough.

Also, the \$200 million that's being given to the city of Toronto for transit is quite important. That's something that is quite significant. I remember my days on city council when we would come cap in hand to the province, asking for money to pay for the TTC, for capital costs. It's nice to see that \$200 million is being given this way.

Also, the gas tax is being increased by a further one cent. I think that's significant, because that money can be used for either operating or capital costs. That's quite important as well.

Also, I wanted to mention that the budget is not closing hospitals in Scarborough. In fact, an additional \$35 million is being allocated for emergency services at Scarborough General. We're seeing money put into youth at risk, vulnerable adults and families, and several other good things, which I'd like to talk about later throughout this debate.

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford): I'm really pleased to speak on the budget debate. Certainly, in the city of Barrie and surrounding areas, we're very disappointed with the lack of attention and financial will from this government to deal with probably the fastest-growing area in Ontario in terms of their infrastructure needs, transportation needs and health care needs.

We've been working very hard to bring GO Transit from Bradford West Gwillimbury up to the city of Barrie, in terms of all the transportation announcements, in terms of trying to get cars off the highway. One of the fastest-growing areas is the city of Barrie, down through there to Highway 9, tremendous traffic flow, and they're doing nothing from Highway 9 up in terms of dealing with that traffic congestion. The investment is needed with respect to GO Transit, to bring it up to the city of Barrie, and would be very positive from the environment perspective and the economic perspective in terms of dealing with Simcoe county.

Also, I was looking at the hospital funding in terms of the projects that are out there that are going to be tendered. I would hope that the projects that are going to be tendered—the community has backed those projects, and they're in a position to actually go ahead. In the city of Barrie, the RVH expansion we're looking at is much needed. Anyone who has to go to RVH knows that we need the expansion now and not far off into the future. They were looking at construction hopefully in 2008, but

we need it now. I know the community has done the fundraising, and our position is for those community funding requirements to be met and to proceed forward with construction of the RVH expansion in 2006.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Arthurs: I want to thank the members for Parry Sound–Muskoka, Timmins–North Bay, Scarborough Southwest and Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford for their comments in respect to—

Mr. Bisson: It's an empire now. Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Arthurs: Sorry; Timmins–James Bay. You're not quite that big. Understandably.

Two minutes is not a lot of time at this point. Nonetheless, speaking to the issue of a balanced budget, it was a former government that left us with a \$5.5-billion hole to climb out of. Our first priority was to health and education and the economy of this province and, at the same time, dealing with the fiscal deficit that a former finance minister left us with. In the time we've had, at the beginning of our third budget, that deficit is now reduced by 75%—a 75% reduction—and we're looking at \$1.4 billion at this point. That's a rather massive achievement during that period of time, and also addressing the agenda that we need to address.

Are we doing as much as everyone would like in each riding? Probably not—in my own and others. But are we doing what's right across the province of Ontario? Clearly, in my view, we are. We are uploading roads to support the forest industry; we are establishing a mining research centre in Sudbury; we've looked at Atikokan from the standpoint of a bio-energy research centre—all of those things to lift people up in northern Ontario and provide opportunities on a go-forward basis.

In Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford and other communities that need infrastructure, Move Ontario will fund those municipalities. Two cents a litre of gas tax will help to support their opportunities for improving their transit systems. There are major investments in GO Transit, with new buses and a new rail opportunity, and ultimately it will serve the people of Ontario all that much better.

There is a lot in this budget. There is something in this budget for each and every riding across the province of Ontario. Not enough for all—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much. Further debate on the budget motion? I recognize the member for Erie–Lincoln.

Applause.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): Thank you very much to my colleagues.

I'm pleased to respond to the budget motion brought forward by the Minister of Finance. I wish I could be standing to offer some compliments to the government. You always try to find something positive to say. I'll give some constructive criticism, but there's no doubt that this budget exemplifies the runaway spending, the big-spending, big-taxing ways of the Dalton McGuinty government, that continues the pattern we've seen established since they took over in October 2003.

Higher taxes mean that average working families in Ontario are finding it increasingly difficult to make ends meet. I think we all know the fact that working families in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario now have some \$2,000 less per year in their pockets. When you look at Dalton McGuinty's big increase in income taxes; when you look at the new user fees that Dalton McGuinty has imposed by privatizing chiropractic and physiotherapy care; when you equate into that the increase in utilities that we've seen—higher hydro rates, natural gas prices, home heating fuels across the board have increased substantially. While gas goes up and down sometimes, last time I filled up it was 96 cents a litre. I filled up at Beaver Gas in Beamsville just the other day. You combine all that, and working families in Ontario have about \$2,000 less in their pockets per year than they did before Dalton McGuinty came into office. That's one major issue I'll speak to a bit more.

1700

I would have expected, at a time that government revenues have gone through the roof, some increase in revenues beyond even their projections of a \$3-billion windfall, when you look at an increase in tax revenue, in savings, on lower-than-expected debt repayments. We saw an increase in government spending in 2005-06 of some \$6 billion. That's on top of a \$5-billion increase the previous fiscal year and a \$5-billion increase the year before, for a total of \$16 billion in increased spending by the McGuinty government, fuelled by higher taxes on the backs of working families and small businesses in Ontario. You would have thought, with that kind of lush position the treasury was in and spending that would make Bob Rae and David Peterson blush, that they would have found some break for working families or businesses in the province of Ontario, but that was nowhere to be found in Dalton McGuinty's new budget.

The second major challenge facing Ontario is the flight of manufacturing jobs from this province. In fact, in the last year some 80,000-plus well-paying manufacturing jobs have simply shut down in Ontario. Whether that's in Cornwall, whether that's in Collingwood, whether that's in St. Catharines or in Niagara, northern Ontario or in the GTA, the pattern is the same: Some 80,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs have fled the province.

Even when you look at Dalton McGuinty's own numbers in his own budget, we see that the major economic indicators are in a decline. We're seeing the trend heading downward on key things like gross domestic product growth. So how fast is the Ontario economy growing? At a lower rate than it used to; it's in a decline. Job creation in the province is down some 28% from the previous budget's figures. Employment growth is down 27%. Exports are down 26%. That's only comparing Ontario to Ontario. But if you compare Ontario's performance to the other provinces, the picture grows grimmer still.

I grew up, and you grew up, I think we all grew up, in an Ontario that led the nation in growth, that was the

envy of the other provinces. Whether you came from the Maritimes or British Columbia or the north, you looked to Ontario to live, work and raise a family—to find a job. That was the Ontario we grew up in, but it's certainly not anymore the reality today in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario. In fact, on so many indicators Ontario is now at the average or below the growth rate of other provinces, or the creation of jobs is a percentage of total jobs in the province. In fact, I was absolutely shocked to find out that we actually have a net migration of Ontarians out of our province to other provinces and territories, and it's not just to Alberta. I recognize the job boom in Alberta, and God bless them for it, but it's not just Alberta but I believe a total of eight provinces and territories that are taking away more Ontarians than there are people coming here.

I'm incredulous. That's not the Ontario I grew up in. It was the opposite trend, where they'd come to our province, that we're not seeing today because of Dalton McGuinty's high taxes, runaway spending and misguided economic and hydro policies. We're losing talented Ontarians to other jurisdictions, and no hope. In fact, I think we'll see an exacerbation of that trend with this budget because it continues the high taxes and runaway spending and there is no economic policy to boast about in this budget.

The other concern I want to bring up today is the lack of transparency and accountability in this budget. Many members may have seen this, many members may not have seen this, but a new accounting system, or an extension of a new accounting system, was brought in in this budget. For the first time in Ontario's history, colleges, school boards, school authorities and hospitals are brought onto provincial books. We support that direction—we began that process—now that new entities come on, because basically the province controls most of the funding that goes to those entities.

This was done in British Columbia; but when British Columbia did it, they had a comparison of the estimates of the previous year and how they would be impacted by the new formula, and then the current fiscal year. The McGuinty Liberals did not express full accountability. They did not address the old numbers. They made the comparison between last year's estimates of spending and this year's actual spending—much more difficult because they're hiding behind the accounting changes. I suspect we will get to the bottom of that, and I suspect we will find even more fiscal mismanagement, and probably the Liberals trying to claim benefits from good management, when it was simply a change in accounting tactics that got them to where they were.

I am saddened that the finance minister and the Premier have chosen to hide behind the accounting change and have not been fully forthcoming on how the accounting change would affect financial figures and the books, going backward for true comparison's sake.

Secondly—I am absolutely incredulous—when you look at the third-quarter financial estimates, the third-quarter financial update, and you compare that to the

budget—I think members know that there are quarterly updates on the financial figures. The one for the quarter ending December 31, 2005, came out sometime in late January. Sometime between that reporting in late January and the budget coming out in mid-March, about two months' time, there was an absolutely huge difference in spending and revenue levels in the two reports. In fact, some miracle must have transpired in January and February, because personal income taxes in the province went up by about \$1 billion. Just short of \$1 billion magically came into the treasury, we're supposed to believe, in that eight weeks' time. Corporate tax revenue—a similar story, I think. Roughly \$400 million magically appeared in the treasury. In fact, I believe if you look at the numbers, there is about a \$2.9-billion discrepancy in terms of what the province said they were going to have and what they actually had at the end of the day. So I will be curious and say to the finance minister, "What magic transpired? What sort of Harry Houdini appearance happened?" Did Doug Henning make a return to boost up the treasury at this time, or in fact did they doctor the third-quarter financial figures? Did they try to mislead taxpayers in Ontario by not being fully revealing about what the true numbers were?

Basically, Dalton McGuinty had about \$2.9 billion, almost \$3 billion, stuffed in his back pockets, overflowing out the sides. He then goes to Ottawa and says, "We're pleading poor," when his own documents, the financial papers that he puts forward, don't have the accurate numbers about provincial revenue. That is my third point. I'm concerned about the level of taxation and the impact on working families. I'm concerned about the performance of the Ontario economy, particularly relative to our historic position as a leader in Canada, now in so many ways middling at best, and I'm very concerned about the lack of accountability by the Ministry of Finance and by this government. I suspect it's not the civil servants of the Ministry of Finance. I think they want to be fully revealing, but I bet you they got orders from the minister's office to doctor the files that actually came forward, which can be tremendously damaging to Ontario's reputation when you see that kind of information that does not reflect the facts.

I talked a bit about the spending increase. The average increase in spending under Dalton McGuinty on a per annum basis is now exceeding \$5 billion a year. The first year it was about \$5 billion under Greg Sorbara's budget, and now under Dwight Duncan it goes up to \$6 billion. The total debt accumulated under the McGuinty government because of runaway spending: \$8.3 billion, now on the backs of taxpayers and future generations to pay that back, plus debt interest.

The average increase in program spending—if you take aside debt repayment, what is the government actually spending on programs in Ontario? I will ask Mr. Speaker if he wants to guess what the average increase in spending is. I think he would be right, if he was allowed to say—8% under the first year of the McGuinty government, 8% in their second year, and now, for 2005-06,

they beat that. I think it was about 9% or slightly more; about a 9.2% increase in program spending. That's incredible. I ask you, are taxpayers in Wellington county seeing a difference because of that increased spending? Are taxpayers in Guelph seeing a benefit from a 9% increase in program spending? Are taxpayers in Toronto seeing the benefit from a 9% increase in spending? I suggest not. If you ask the average person on the street, "Spending has gone up 9%, and have you seen the benefits?" I think they would be shocked that our spending has gone up that much without an impact of improved services to taxpayers.

The other challenge is that the average growth rate of nominal GDP has been roughly 4%. If you are spending at twice the rate of the economy's growth rate, it's simply unsustainable. It leaves us extremely vulnerable to changes in interest rates, changes in the dollar, downturns in the United States. But nonetheless, irresponsibly and recklessly, Dalton McGuinty has chosen to increase spending by 8%, 8% and then 9% per fiscal year, even though our economy is growing at 4% at best.

1710

In an interesting comparison, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation calculated average spending under the following governments: the last year of the David Peterson government, the Bob Rae government average, the Mike Harris-Ernie Eves government average and the Dalton McGuinty budgets. You're probably thinking to yourself, "David Peterson and Bob Rae were the very poster children of excessive, runaway government spending. They were the poster children of a government that couldn't keep control of finances and just spent on every whim." Well, I'll tell you, in the last year of David Peterson's government, the former gold medallist, it was about \$6,113 per capita, and these are in constant 2004 dollars. Bob Rae topped that. Bob Rae averaged \$6,380 in his budgets. The Mike Harris-Ernie Eves government average was a much more frugal \$5,962.

So what did Dalton McGuinty do compared to David Peterson and Bob Rae? Did I say those were the poster children for runaway spending?

Interjections: You did.

Mr. Hudak: Dalton McGuinty has left them in the dust. Dalton McGuinty is the gold medallist now for runaway spending. David Peterson and Bob Rae are back there heaving, trying to catch their breath with the runaway pace of Dalton McGuinty sprinting by them. Dalton McGuinty's 2004 budget spent \$6,514 per person, fully \$400 more than David Peterson spent per person. Then he topped it in 2005, with \$6,578 per capita. We'll see what this new budget means when we calculate those figures. But my goodness, imagine that picture: Dalton McGuinty in the big spending race sprinting by Bob Rae and David Peterson. Who would have thunk it?

Then again, today Dalton McGuinty goes to the Empire Club and starts pleading about the fiscal gap. We take this issue seriously. We want to help the Premier make his case with Ottawa to address the fiscal gap, but my goodness, it's getting hard, it's getting awfully hard,

when you see the Premier spending like a drunken sailor. And with all due respect to drunken sailors, at least they spend their own money. Dalton McGuinty is taking your money and taxpayers' money and spending it like it's going out of style, waking up the next day with a hangover, saying, "We need more money from Ottawa. We're running out." It's like somebody with a new suit, new shiny shoes and new hat going with that new cap in hand begging for money. You just can't take that seriously.

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: If he got some deals; but he's not exactly getting deals. Maybe the squirrels got a deal; they look pretty happy. But Dalton McGuinty has done tremendous damage to our ability to address the fiscal gap.

First of all, he has a major credibility problem. This is a guy who has broken promises faster than he's increased spending, although I think it's pretty close—a major credibility problem. Sending a salesman to close the deal who has a reputation for not keeping his promises is problematic enough as it is. Secondly, on top of that, when you have a runaway spending budget like this, when you intentionally run a deficit, when he had plenty of opportunity to balance the books—I said earlier he had almost \$3 billion in windfall revenue. They say, "Ontario performed better than we thought it would." No; they doctored the books. They intentionally lowered expectations because they didn't want to have accountability. They stuffed their money into their pockets—they had a big pile over there in the Ministry of Finance—so they could do a big end-of-year spending spree and not be accountable for it.

Where was I on that analogy? I think I tortured that one a little bit.

Mr. Tascona: Squirrely.

Mr. Hudak: No, it wasn't the squirrels, although I may come back to the squirrels.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): Getting all dressed up, cap in hand.

Mr. Hudak: Sure; in this case, with Ottawa. All dressed up and begging for money from Ottawa after going on a spending spree. He had about \$3 billion stuffed in his pocket, a slush fund over at the Ministry of Finance, and the deficit was \$1.4 billion.

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: I know my friend is very good with math. My friend from Perth-Middlesex is a wizard with math, and he would know that \$3 billion is more than \$1.4 billion. In fact, it's more than twice as much money at hand, but they chose not to balance the books and instead are intentionally running a deficit. What kind of signal does that send to Ottawa? What tremendous damage Dalton McGuinty is doing to our case on the fiscal gap by intentionally running a deficit. And he had \$3 billion that he put out there in spending as opposed to balancing the books.

Look a little bit to the east. The province of Quebec, which had nowhere near the revenue that Ontario was hiding; nowhere near it—I forget what the exact number was, but it was between \$1 billion and \$2 billion.

Mr. Miller: Did they balance the books?

Mr. Hudak: My friend from Parry Sound–Muskoka asks, “Did they balance the books?”

You’re thinking, “Well, Quebec is a smaller province than Ontario. They didn’t have the \$6 billion of increased revenue. They didn’t have the \$3-billion slush fund sitting there in the finance minister’s office.” But do you know what? Quebec balanced the budget. Quebec made the difficult but necessary decisions to make sure they worked within the finances available. They did not choose to run a deficit. They did not choose to intentionally spend so they could run a deficit. Quebec balanced the books, which I think greatly empowers their case with Ottawa because they’re making some tougher decisions, and hurts ours in comparison.

People may say, “Well, Ontario has always been the engine of growth. Surely if Ontario continues to run a deficit under Dalton McGuinty, that must be the case across provinces in this country.” The reality: Only Prince Edward Island and Ontario continue to run deficits. I bet you Prince Edward Island would be counting their lucky charms if they had an additional \$6 billion coming into the revenue base, but they do not, of course.

I have to think that Dalton McGuinty’s spending spree of a budget, hiding money in the treasury instead of reporting it properly and, third, intentionally running a deficit so that he could stay in deficit for another year, have done tremendous damage to our case.

I spoke a bit already about the drop in some of the important variables, the economic indicators for 2006; for example, GDP growth. The 2005 budget said 2.8%, the economic statement, 2.6%, and the 2006 budget, 2.3%. Exports similarly show a downward trend from the 2005 to the 2006 budget. Retail sales growth falls behind the growth rate of the other provinces. So there are across-the-board troublesome economic trends that show Ontario has lost its position as a leader in Canada or a leader in North America under Dalton McGuinty’s high-taxes, high-spending budgets.

The last point I would make is that I’m disappointed in the response of the ministry with respect to the tax breaks on dividend income. This is the issue that Ralph Goodale got in some trouble over. I understand the caution Liberals would have about another scandal—

Mr. Tascona: and Scott Brison too.

Mr. Hudak: And Scott Brison as well. You’d think we would have had a better answer from this government on how the provinces are going to address this issue. Other provinces have moved in this direction. Ontario chose not to, which shows this is a government that would rather tax and keep taxing than give any kind of break to hard-working taxpayers.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Bisson: I’ve got to say, I listened attentively to the comments from the finance critic from the Conservative Party, and I want to know what the Tories have against the army and the navy. What is it? You guys are always talking about sailors as if they are drunk or something. I take exception to that. I served in Her

Majesty’s army. I was there along with a whole bunch of people in the military, and they weren’t a bunch of drunken sailors. They worked hard. They were there serving their country, and I am mad at the Tories for alleging that they’re nothing but a bunch of drunken sailors. No, no; I’m just having some fun with you.

Listen, I understand the comment that the member is making.

Interjection.

Mr. Bisson: The squirrels I could get into, but not in the House. I’m not going down that one, all right?

I just want to say that I agree with some of the comments the member made, because it seems to me that the government had some choices to make.

I was a member of government in 1990. We came to power in the middle of what was the worst recession in probably the last 40-odd years. We were faced with having to deal with the question of what you do when you basically don’t do anything and you’ve got an \$8.5-billion deficit. That’s where we were at when we came in in 1990. I would have loved to have been part of a government that got elected and found out they had a \$3-billion surplus in one budget year.

It seems to me that some of the decisions the government made were somewhat interesting, because it’s a group of decisions that, when you take them individually, I guess, if you’re one particular stakeholder, you say, “Oh, that’s good news,” but when you start to peel away the numbers and take a look at the budget, you find out that it’s not all it’s said to be and, number two, there are a lot of contradictions within the budget itself. I’m going to have a chance to speak to that very shortly, and I know that you and everybody out there is looking forward to it, and especially the members of the government are looking forward to what I have to say on the budget in about 10 minutes.

1720

Mr. Arthurs: I’m pleased to take the opportunity to provide a couple of minutes of comments on the speech from the member from Erie–Lincoln, the critic for the official opposition. I was pleased to have him at our breakfast budget. Last Friday morning he took the time to come all the way from the southwest, Niagara, to Pickering and visit with us, which was really great.

Our plan, though, is different than their plan. Their plan was to increase spending, cut taxes and drive us into deficit, and then deny it or go into complete denial for an extended period of time. Now, they went on about that there was no deficit; there was no deficit. Finally they acknowledged the fact that they drove us into deficit. They let spending get out of control. They weren’t managing it, and they cut taxes. Well, that doesn’t work. Our plan is to create opportunity by being prudent fiscal managers.

In the time we’ve had in office—this being our third budget, but two complete budget cycles—we’ve taken that fiscal deficit and driven it down from \$5.5 billion to a far more modest \$1.4 billion, a 75% reduction in the deficit. We’re on target for 2008-09 for a balanced

budget, or a year earlier if we don't need the reserves. We have found that in 2005-06 that reserve isn't needed, so we've managed in this year to get that deficit down to \$1.4 billion.

The economy has been creating good, high-paying jobs: 200,000-plus high-paying, good jobs. We need, though, the federal government's engagement on some files if we're to close the fiscal imbalance, which will assist us. We're pleased to see that the Minister of Finance federally, Mr. Flaherty, in his discussions with our Minister of Finance has certainly, I understand, expressed some willingness to pursue the matter with him. So we believe in prudent fiscal—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Runciman: I compliment the member for Erie-Lincoln for doing an outstanding job, as usual. He certainly is a compliment to the Conservative caucus, a compliment to this assembly in the outstanding job he does not only representing his own constituency and his constituents therein but I think in raising very important issues for all of the people of the province of Ontario on a very regular basis.

I happened to be an occupant of this assembly during the Peterson government years. I was quite shocked; I didn't realize, as the member pointed out, the spending habits of the Rae government and the Peterson government. I recall the governor of the Bank of Canada during the Peterson years calling on the Liberal Peterson government to restrain its spending because it was driving up inflation in the country, because of the rapid clip of spending by the Liberal government of the day. Mr. Peterson rebuffed that. To find out today that the McGuinty government now holds the record in terms of spending increases on a year-over-year basis is quite shocking and should be disturbing to each and every member of this assembly.

One of the other elements that we've heard of recently is that as we've approached the end of the fiscal year, many of the ministries have gone on internal spending binges to ensure that they've spent their budgets. I want to take this opportunity today—anyone in the public service who is aware of this. We've heard some in the Attorney General's office: \$20 million out the window, out the door. This is the fax number: 416-325-1493. Fax the information to us. Let us know about the misuse of hard-earned taxpayer dollars by faxing 416-325-1493. Make us aware of it. We'll do something about it. We'll bring it to public light.

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): That sounded like a paid political announcement, whatever it was.

I'm very pleased with the dollars we've received in Ottawa after seven or eight years of not funding programs. Public transit, which was 75% in the early 1990s, was dropped down to zero. I remember sitting on council in the city of Ottawa. When I first arrived there, we had a bus fleet which was very, very difficult to keep in repair because the municipality just could not take the down-loading that came with the Tory years in the 1990s and in the early 2000s.

I've just added up the dollars that have come to Ottawa since we became the government: The total for roads and transportation in Ottawa alone is \$468 million. These are new dollars. It was \$200 million for the north-south light rail, \$18 million in new gas tax funds last year, \$27 million this year, \$10 million in late December 2005 for help with transit funding, \$93 million announced last June for Highway 7, \$50 million announced last June for Highway 17 through Kanata. With all those and with the \$32 million just announced, this will mean that the city of Ottawa will be able to proceed with projects that are very needed, and this is what is happening right across Ontario with that \$400 million, outside of Toronto, that's being used for roads and bridges.

This budget is trying to repair that fiscal deficit of \$5.6 billion we were left, the infrastructure deficit that was created over many years by the Tories, and the health care deficit which was so important. Just in these last two years we have increased MRI numbers by 42%. That's what we're doing in this province.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Erie-Lincoln has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Hudak: I thank all my colleagues for their comments. I do have some additional facts in response to my colleagues. Nicole Goodman, an outstanding intern in my office, has been working very hard. She dug up some good facts that we have a duty to share with the Legislature.

The TD Bank Financial Group's provincial economic update forecasts that Ontario's annual GDP growth will be the second-lowest in all of Canada in 2006-07, narrowly beating New Brunswick. Scotiabank Group—

Mr. Runciman: With a balanced budget.

Mr. Hudak: And New Brunswick has a balanced budget, my colleague adds.

Scotiabank Group's provincial report says that Ontario is still in the slow lane. The report observes that Ontario's GDP is expected to further decelerate by an additional 2% in 2006, placing the province of Ontario below the national average for the fourth year in a row under Dalton McGuinty's leadership.

I talked too about the lack of accountability from the Ministry of Finance. Let me give you some other examples. I know it's not the civil servants. I know they're pushing back about this. They want accountability. They want the budget to be transparent, but the political interference from the Premier's office is preventing this. The Ministry of Finance now is no longer disclosing details like expected revenue in the medium-term fiscal plan. For example, you could always look and see what personal income tax revenue was going to be, retail sales tax, corporate tax, health premium etc. You could always see what it was planned to be in the future. No longer; we just get one group number continuing to obscure the finances of the province.

One more thing: I talked about the dividend tax credit. British Columbia and Manitoba have already committed to raise their dividend tax credit rates to align with the federal direction, but no indication from the province of Ontario.

Lastly, I want to give a plug to www.mcguintywatch.ca, our website and our newsletter that keeps track of the runaway spending.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate on the budget motion. I recognize the member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Bisson: Thank you very much, Speaker. I am so delighted to be here with you today and with all my colleagues in the assembly. We'll have a chance over the next 20 minutes or so to bring a couple of issues to the floor of the assembly vis-à-vis what I think the government kind of missed when it came to how they did this budget recently.

Let's put this into context. This particular year has been a fairly good one for Ontario as far as revenue, I think we can all admit. The government made some choices, and it seems to me that the choices they made, as I said earlier, were somewhat interesting. They could have chosen to do some things that I think could have made a real difference in people's lives and how people are able to fare in this economy.

1730

Over the last couple of weeks, as did most of you, I went back to the constituency. It's what we call constituency break, where we are gone for two or three weeks, back to our riding. Like everybody here, I had an opportunity to go back and talk to local constituents in Hearst, Moosonee, Kapuskasing, Smooth Rock Falls and Timmins and other places—

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Attawapiskat.

Mr. Bisson: I didn't get to Attawapiskat. I'm sorry; I didn't get there this break. I'm going to have to do it the next time out. I did Fort Albany, I did Kash and I did Moosonee, but that's a whole other story.

Anyway, what was striking—I was commenting to my staff about it a couple of days ago, because I saw it again last week when I was in the constituency office, I believe on Tuesday, Wednesday or Friday; I forget what day I was there. I did a little bit of front desk duty. I think that's something every MPP should try to do. Now, I did it by default, because I was trying to fix some computers. I'm a bit of a computer geek, as some of you would know, and I was trying to fix some software problems we're having on our system. As a result, I was at the front desk. So the MPP is at the front desk, and everybody is going to talk to the MPP.

The thing that really struck me was the degree to which people came in and talked about issues of poverty. That really struck me, because I thought, here we are, supposedly in an economy that is doing not too badly. In the city of Timmins we are luckier than most. Yes, we have been affected negatively by what is happening in the forestry sector, but mining has done quite well. When gold and base metal prices are where they are today, it's pretty hard not to make money in the mining industry, even despite the high Canadian dollar and despite the energy prices—a pretty big issue, I think, for Kidd Creek in my riding. Even at that level, when the base metal prices and the gold metal prices are up, mining tends to

do well, and I was surprised at the degree to which people were coming into my constituency office talking about issues of poverty.

For example, I can't remember his name, and I wish I could because I've talked to this gentleman a couple of times; it just doesn't come to me. But he comes into the office and says he is on ODSP, the Ontario disability support program, and has been for about 10 years. He is unable to work because, obviously, of his medical condition. He says, "I look at what I started to receive 10 years ago on ODSP and I look at where I am today, and I've fallen back. I can't afford to make ends meet. We have kids. We decided to have a family. I got sick. The children are there, so you have to make ends meet." He came in specifically to talk about how they have fallen back on ODSP and that this particular government has not, in his opinion, kept the commitment when it comes to increases to welfare and ODSP.

In the first year, there was a 2% increase, there was none last year, and there was a 2% increase in this budget. It's better than nothing, I guess. But his point was that if you look at where he was 10 years ago compared to where he is today, he feels he's about 35% back. He says, "We are having to make decisions in our family"—it's not just this individual who told me this, but a number of other people—"about what we buy for groceries. Can we afford to buy very basic things for our family, such as milk and bread?" They are really having to penny pinch their way through the family budget.

He talked about the child tax credit, about how it is important for him that the government should not be clawing back the money he and his wife get from the federal government for their two children. As a result of his disabilities on ODSP, the provincial government takes that full amount of money back. He says, "Listen, that would go a long way. That is about \$3,500 of my family's income for the year if the government was not to claw it back." He says \$3,500 is the difference between pasta and putting maybe a little bit of chicken in it so they can have a bit more food to eat.

Those are the kinds of issues people are having to deal with. I was a bit taken aback, especially in the city of Timmins, to hear that to the degree I did. So as my leader, Howard Hampton, pointed out yesterday, and my colleague Andrea Horwath from Hamilton East pointed out today, this government had a choice. It could have said, "We are going to eliminate the clawback to the child tax credit. We are going to make sure that the dollars the federal government gives to individuals at the lowest parts of the income scale in this country are not going to be clawed back by the province of Ontario." Only the province of Ontario does that. It was started by the Conservatives under Mike Harris. We thought it was wrong then. The Liberals stood in opposition and said it was wrong then. They come to office and now they are doing nothing about it.

The interesting point is that the Minister of Finance got cornered yesterday by the media, because the media all of a sudden said, "Yeah, that isn't fair. Why is it they

haven't done something? With a \$3-billion surplus, they could have spent the \$120 million in order to give, on an annual basis, at least the money back that people are entitled to under the family tax credit." Mr. Duncan responded by saying, "Oh, we can't do everything in one shot. We're going to do it sometime later." I would have to be pretty cynical to believe that he's either spinning the media, because they've had three years to do it, or they're trying to save it for the next election. I say to people out there, it's cruel, but it's also cynical. I think it adds to the way people see politicians overall. Why is it that it takes an election year for a government to announce something they should have done in year one? The bigger question is, after the election, can people believe that the government would actually deliver?

It has not been beyond this government to announce all kinds of things when they were in opposition. I remember Dalton McGuinty, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Health, the Minister of Community and Social Services—all of them would be up in the House over and over again and berate the Conservative government of Mike Harris and Ernie Eves for not having done things like the elimination of the child tax credit, the money from the clawback, or not funding autism for kids after age six. Now from opposition to government, this government doesn't do anything.

While I'm on the issue of autism, we all have that issue. I've dealt with a whole bunch of people in my constituency—Mr. Gvozdanivic and a whole bunch of other people across the riding—who are in a situation where their kids, after age six, are not able to get the support they need. In Mr. Gvozdanivic's case—I've raised it in the Legislature before—the issue is that he is getting services from the association for community living. Their budgets are such that they can only offer limited response and, as a result, they're not getting the kind of support they need in order to care for their kids.

I had another woman, Jackie, who called me up the other day and said that her daughter, who is in need of services to stay home independently because of her condition, has had her hours cut, in her estimation, from 39 hours a month to 30 hours a month. She was saying, "I'm being told that I'm being greedy because I'm asking for housekeeping services. I don't even want housekeeping services. I'm prepared to wash the toilet, I'm prepared to wash the floors, I'm prepared to do all those things to keep my daughter at home and have her live with us independently, because she's not a young girl, she's a grown woman"—Tracey, the one who is in need of the services. "All I'm asking is that they provide her with the personal care she needs in order to help me care for my daughter."

Here she is finding again that a government agency has not had an increase in their budget in a number of years. That agency is not being mean-spirited. They're saying, "Listen, we have this amount of money. We have much more need in the community than we had years before, because people are getting older, our population is increasing"—as far as the number of people that they're caring for—"and there's not enough money to go

around." So they're having to ration services for people out of organizations like the community care access centres and all of the services they dispatch, or leave people at home.

I say to the government, like I told Jackie, the sad part is that Jackie is doing a service to the taxpayers and to the province by caring for her daughter. If she didn't do it, her daughter would be in an institution, at a much higher cost to the province. Why don't we, as a province, properly support the community agencies that provide services to people like Tracey? It's really unfair to both Tracey and her mother, Jackie, to be put in that position.

The government had a choice in this budget. The government could have said, "We recognize that community care access centres and agencies that provide support in the home to leave people home independently as long as they can have not had the increases in their budgets to adjust to what's going on in their communities. Therefore, we need to enter into a dialogue to see how much that would be by verifying numbers etc., making sure it's accountable and providing the dollars so that we can properly support people in their homes."

I tell you, we're going to be in an even worse situation as time goes on, because, as we know, the baby boomers are coming into the system. As the baby boomers come in, if we don't start dealing with this now, it's going to be a huge adjustment down the road. Instead, this government had a \$3-billion surplus and decided to do absolutely nothing about those support services that people like Tracey and Jackie need so that people can live at home independently, or people on ODSP who are just trying to make ends meet. I think there are some choices we could have made that would have made a real difference in people's lives. The government failed on that point.

I guess the disappointing part for me and for a lot of Ontarians was that they really thought that Dalton McGuinty was different. They understood that in the last election, apparently, the election was about choosing change. Here we are, three years into their mandate, and I say, "What kind of change have we gotten for Jackie or Tracey? What kind of change have we got for people on ODSP? What kind of change have we got for students who are having to pay higher tuition fees because this government is continuing down the road of deregulating tuition, such as the Tories did, and increasing tuition fees?" I say to the government, what change? This is no different. All we did is that we changed chairs on the deck of the Titanic. We had Captain Mike who used to run the show; now we've got Captain Dalton. And if you take a look at the players, the players are different on the deck, but when it comes to the services being provided, they're basically the same. So there hasn't been, in my estimation, the type of change that was needed to deal with those issues that I think people thought they were voting for in the last election.

1740

The other issue I want to raise is where I think you failed on the economic development front. There are basically a couple of economies in Ontario. There is the

economy in southern Ontario, which is fairly robust at times. There are problems now in the parts manufacturing industry, in paper and others in southern Ontario. But by and large, they're two different economies. There's an economy that no matter what you do is going to do well: that economy around the Golden Horseshoe. There is a certain amount of activity that's going to happen in that economy no matter what government does and no matter who the government is, because the population base is there, the transportation infrastructure is there, the market is just over the border, the other side of Windsor or whatever border crossing you happen to be at, and that economy does fairly well.

But then there's another economy. There's a rural economy within the agricultural part of this province and there's a northern economy. And those are two economies of the three, I think, in Ontario where the government has really failed miserably. You take a look at the farm community. I was just talking to some grain and oilseed producers today—Alan Renwick, I noticed, was in the Legislature this afternoon again with people from the oilseed and grain producers. The farmer I was talking to, whom I've talked to before, said he was disappointed in this budget. But he says that he's resilient. They're farmers. They've been surviving for many years, and they are going to figure out how to survive this government. But they're saying, "Listen, we're seeing farms go down one after another and families basically leaving a traditional way of life that has been part of those families for generations." And this government failed miserably.

What really frustrates me is, this government sits there and says, "Oh, well, it's the feds. We've got to get the federal government. It's bad old Stephen Harper's fault." Well, listen. You're the government of Ontario. There are things that are within your control. You do what you can do, and if the federal government won't jump onside, I'm not going to sit and wait after them. I know what that record has given the First Nations communities of northern Ontario. We've waited after the federal government for 120 years, and it's nothing but poverty and no infrastructure. If we wait for Stephen Harper or Jean Chrétien or whoever the heck it might be as the Prime Minister of Canada, we're going to be waiting until there are no more farmers in the province of Ontario, because they, quite frankly, are incapable of responding.

I think this provincial government has a responsibility to do what it can within its own means to assist the farm community. Three billion dollars: You don't think that could have done something to help the farm community? I'm not saying give them \$3 billion, but certainly you could have come some way towards meeting what they need when it comes to farm stabilization programs.

There's the forestry sector, as community after community after community has been telling you, and you guys have been tinkering at the edges. You're going to a debt-ridden industry. It's a terrible way to put it, but I look at Tembec in my backyard. The shares are trading, hovering, at about a buck, give or take 10%. They're having difficulties because of what's happening with

energy and what's happening generally within the forestry sector, and, by the way, they are heavily, heavily into debt. And this government's response is announcing two or three programs to lend them more money.

All right. I'm in debt. I owe money on my Visa, I've got line-of-credit debt and I've got a mortgage, and you come to me and say you're going to give me more? What is that going to do? It's only going to extend the bankruptcy by another year or two. We don't have to give them more loans. What we need to do is deal with the basic issues. We need to deal with energy prices. How can you run a pulp and paper mill in northern Ontario or anywhere else, like Cornwall, when we have electricity prices at what they are? You've got to deal with that. You've got to come to terms with that. Industry and others have been telling you, but you sit there and you say, "Oh, no. We're doing a great job on energy."

You deal with the core issues around fibre. Now, I'll give the government some credit. I don't want to stand here and say that they've done nothing on the fibre issue. They met partway what industry was asking for. They were asking for some relief in regard to the fibre delivery cost to the mill, and they've dealt with some of that. But it took us beating you over the head for a year and a half. Every mayor in northeastern and northwestern Ontario, every union leader, every MPP in opposition—because the government MPPs couldn't do it; their hands were tied—every citizen, every radio station, every paper, everybody, Save Our North and others—not Save Our North; I should say the strong organization—basically lobbying and lobbying.

Eventually the government said, "Whoa, we're getting beat up. We've got to do something. What do we do?" David Ramsay said, "Well, they want something on fibre costs. How much is that? That's not a big-ticket item. Let's do that."

So you picked the smallest-ticket item as a response and said, "Okay, go beg the federal government for your solution now." It's the bad old Stephen Harper government again. I'm saying that you had an opportunity.

Those economies in northern and rural Ontario are ones in which we have to do things differently. Transportation is a bigger issue. The whole issue of the labour force in there is very different. The whole makeup of the industry itself in terms of the economy is different: We can't come at it from the same responses that we do in southern Ontario. We have to respond by putting in place real programs that assist farmers in keeping themselves afloat. They're not asking for anything they're not entitled to. My Lord, look at the American agricultural industry to see to what degree it subsidizes compared to Ontario. We don't even come close. The European farm community: We don't even come close to them in the degree to which they're subsidized. We're the only country that says, "We're going to run on an unsubsidized model," while everybody else around us is subsidizing their farmers from here up the yingyang. You can't operate in that environment.

I'm saying to the government that we need to support those types of economies—the farm economy and the

northern economy—because at some point, if you don't, as we close down those towns—because that's what's going to happen—people are going to move south, and we don't want that to happen for all kinds of reasons.

You had choices in this budget. You had an opportunity to make a difference. You made some choices, some of which I can support. I think that expanding the subway system in Toronto is a great idea. We did it as a government and the Tories undid it, but we had announced it. We actually had the tunnels being built. I think they're a good investment. I don't argue with you on that.

But \$3 billion, and you couldn't find \$120 million to help people when it came to the elimination of the child tax credit? Three billion dollars, and you couldn't find money to assist families when it comes to kids with autism? Three billion dollars, and you couldn't find at least part of a solution for the farm community? Three billion dollars, and you couldn't do something for the forestry sector? You didn't even have to come close to \$1 billion on all that stuff when you add it up.

Instead, this government said, "We're going to do what's going to give us an opportunity to invest in our infrastructure," which I support and don't have a problem with. But at the end of the day they're more worried about photo ops for their cabinet ministers and backbenchers than they are about trying to find solutions. That's really what it comes down to. Everybody put their shopping list in and said, "Boy, what I need for the next election is to stand by a new subway station, or "What I need for the next election is to stand by a new bus lane somewhere in the city of Brampton or Mississauga." Great projects: I haven't got a problem with them; I support them. But, hey, there's another part of the province out there and it's a lot bigger than down here, you know. Some of you have come up to take a look at it.

The last point is the First Nations community. We've got communities like Kashechewan that don't even have a lock-up. Police can't do their jobs. They pick somebody up but they can't lock them up. There's nowhere to put them. We've got communities that don't have police cars. We have communities that don't have ambulances. We've got communities that go without the most basic of services and we couldn't do something for them?

It would be pretty hard to vote for a budget, at the end of the day, that has those types of things left out. As a New Democrat, I think it's important that we invest, as the government says, in our communities, but that we invest in those areas that I think make the biggest difference to people's lives. I think about kids with autism, I think about people who are less fortunate in our society, I think about the farm and the rural community and the northern community and I say we should have invested there.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London–Fanshawe): Thank you for giving me this opportunity to stand up and respond to my friend from Timmins–James Bay, who was talking about the budget. The member was talking about how he

thought that Premier McGuinty was different from many Premiers who came to the province of Ontario. I agree with him that he is different, because he understands the issues very well. When we got elected, we didn't find just one deficit. We had four deficits: a health deficit, an education deficit, a fiscal deficit and an infrastructure deficit. That's why we tackled all these issues step by step.

1750

It's unfair when the member from Timmins–James Bay talks about how we don't pay attention to rural Ontario. If you go to the record, since we got elected we've invested more than \$800 million in the agriculture area. I think it's very important. This year, two or three weeks ago, we announced \$125 million for rural Ontario. I agree with him that it's not enough because the issue is very important and big. I want the members from both sides, the Conservatives and the NDP, to join us and talk to the federal government to help us address this issue in detail. This issue is so big.

I also want to tell you about investments in infrastructure. It's very important. We met with the industries, the manufacturers in the province, and they told us that gridlock around the Toronto area is blocking them from making investments. That is why our investment went into transportation and the transit system, to make it easier for the many people who ride and invest money in this province, to make the manoeuvres easier. I think it's very important for the future economy in this province.

Education is very important and we tackled this issue. He is talking about high tuition. For the first time ever in this province, we put a freeze on tuition for the last two years—

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

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): I'm pleased to comment as well. This government has been going on and on about what a great job they've done in the budget. What they've done a great job of is fooling the taxpayers, or attempting to fool the taxpayers of the province of Ontario.

There is absolutely no doubt that this government could have balanced the budget this year. And there's also no doubt that they still could have funded the programs they're lauding, such as the infrastructure programs they're talking about across the province here in Ontario. They could have done that as well with any kind of prudent management and a commitment to priority spending. But what they have done is they have gone on a binge. They've gone on a spending orgy to ensure that they would have a deficit because it buffers their argument with the federal government with respect to where the province of Ontario is as opposed to the federal government and the finances of the country.

There was ample opportunity. There was no doubt that this could have easily been done. So what's happened is they have gone on this spending spree, spending your money. The hard-working people of this province, the taxpayers of Ontario, have been shafted. They could have

been given a balanced budget this year, which is exactly what the economists are expecting from an economy that is performing like Ontario's, but this government chose to ensure that there would be a deficit, when that was completely unnecessary. They talk about people wanting it both ways. They could have had that both ways; they could have funded the programs and still balanced the budget.

We're asking people out there in ministries across this province to let us know about examples of waste because we know they're out there. Please fax us at 416-325-1493. We want to get to the bottom of this. The people of Ontario deserve nothing less.

Mr. Arthurs: I'm pleased to take a moment or so in responding to the comments made by the member from Timmins–James Bay, and I'll have to repeat that so I don't get it wrong again.

I want to make a couple of comments. We had a one-time increase in revenue, and there's certainly no guarantee in any way that we can see at this point that that's going to be sustained. If you work some overtime during the year, it's kind of like one-time funding. You don't premise your expenditures on your overtime. So you don't go out and extend your house or buy a big new house with a long-term mortgage on it. You might buy the new couch that you wanted with the overtime, but you don't mortgage yourself on the overtime.

What we've done with some of the funding available—and the members from Timmins–James Bay spoke to matters such as farming. Eight hundred million dollars for income support over three years, \$125 million just a few weeks ago, is a clear indication in large dollars of our commitment to the farming community. I think it's clear that more is necessary from government generally to help the farm community, and we look forward to the federal budget that's pending to see what they're going to do to come to the table along with us.

We've heard a lot during the debate about the national child benefit supplement. Since we came to office—in 2004, 2005 and 2006—we've allowed the increases to flow through to those children and their parents. We have increased in two different budgets the support payments for those on Ontario Works and ODSP by 3% and 2%. The impact on a single-parent family with two children is that they now have some \$1,600 a year more than they did when we came to office. That's about a 15.7% increase. That's a prudent and responsible approach.

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): The member for Timmins–James Bay raised a number of issues with respect to the economy of southern Ontario, in particular the farm economy, and made reference to the miserable treatment of the farm economy by this present McGuinty government. I think that as we debate this NDP budget motion, it is important to reiterate that the Ontario Minister of Finance has cut the ag budget by 21%. That scopes out at \$244 million. Last year we saw a cut. We saw a cut to the ag budget of \$167 million. A number of members opposite have made mention of the

\$125-million package, not only for cash crop but also for livestock and the horticultural sector. That \$125 million does sound impressive; I think it's very important to point out during the budget motion today that that's 52% less than what was forthcoming last year. That's 52% less for not only cash crop, but for livestock, not even to mention ginseng and so many other commodities—cull cow, beef, dairy heifer export—that received nothing.

The member for Timmins–James Bay was talking to some grain and oilseed farmers. Those farmers, as we heard from the member, were told to go to Ottawa. We realize that farmers are receiving cheques from the federal government. This was money that was originally announced last December by the federal Liberal government. Some 11,000 Ontario cash crop farmers have received their federal cheques to the tune of something like 30 million federal dollars. They're still waiting for something from the McGuinty government.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Timmins–James Bay has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Bisson: I want to thank all the members for their comments, but I'm going to focus on one because I heard a comment from the Liberal benches, a particular member—I'm not sure who it was so I'm not going to make any allegations—

Mr. Hudak: I know.

Mr. Bisson: That'll be your turn.

It was, "Tell me how we can spend more money on farmers and balance the budget." The reality is that if you invest in farmers, they're going to go out and buy—you know, they're going to be more prosperous. They're going to be buying farm equipment, they're going to be hiring people to work on their farms, and they're going to be buying supplies and services, all of which are basically activities in the rural economy that at the end of the day are going to assist the Ontario economy. That's how you make an economy grow and that was—

Mr. McNeely: Spend, spend.

Mr. Bisson: There he goes. He says, "Spend, spend," and I'm saying, yes, spend some money on the farm industry, spend some money on the forest industry in northern Ontario. At the end of the day, those are activities that are going to give you back money. If you have a prosperous and strong rural farm economy, that money is going to come back to the treasury of Ontario. If you have a strong northern economy when it comes to forestry, again that money is going to come back. I find it disheartening that members of the government would say, "Well, you tell me how I'm going to spend money on the farm community and I'm going to be able to balance the budget." That's how you make an economy grow, and I say to the government, if you don't get that, boy, are we in trouble.

The Acting Speaker: It being past 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until later on this evening at 6:45.

The House adjourned at 1800.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. James K. Bartleman

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. Brown

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma–Manitoulin	Brown, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (L) Speaker / Président	Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)
Ancaster–Dundas– Flamborough–Aldershot	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Haliburton–Victoria–Brock	Scott, Laurie (PC)
Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC) Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Beaches–East York / Beaches–York–Est	Prue, Michael (ND)	Hamilton East / Hamilton–Est	Horwath, Andrea (ND)
Bramalea–Gore–Malton– Springdale	Kular, Kuldip (L)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Hon. / L'hon. Marie (L) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique
Brampton Centre / Brampton–Centre	Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Hamilton West / Hamilton–Ouest	Marsales, Judy (L)
Brampton West–Mississauga / Brampton–Ouest–Mississauga	Dhillon, Vic (L)	Hastings–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (L) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Huron–Bruce	Mitchell, Carol (L)
Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kenora–Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (L) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener–Centre	Milloy, John (L)
Chatham–Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Kitchener–Waterloo	Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
Don Valley East / Don Valley–Est	Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy government House leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement t	Lanark–Carleton	Sterling, Norman W. (PC)
Don Valley West / Don Valley–Ouest	Wynne, Kathleen O. (L)	Leeds–Grenville	Runciman, Robert W. (PC)
Dufferin–Peel– Wellington–Grey	Tory, John (PC) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	London North Centre / London–Centre–Nord	Matthews, Deborah (L)
Durham	O'Toole, John (PC)	London West / London–Ouest	Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (L) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Eglinton–Lawrence	Colle, Hon. / L'hon. Mike (L) Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration	London–Fanshawe	Ramal, Khalil (L)
Elgin–Middlesex–London	Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (L) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail	Markham	Wong, Tony C. (L)
Erie–Lincoln Essex	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga–Centre	Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (L) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke–Centre	Crosier, Bruce (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Mississauga East / Mississauga–Est	Fonseca, Peter (L)
Etobicoke North / Etobicoke–Nord	Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (L) Minister of Energy / ministre de l'Énergie	Mississauga South / Mississauga–Sud	Peterson, Tim (L)
Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Mississauga West / Mississauga–Ouest	Delaney, Bob (L)
	Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (L) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement	Niagara Centre / Niagara–Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Niagara Falls	Craiton, Kim (L)
Guelph–Wellington	Sandals, Liz (L)	Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Nipissing	Smith, Monique M. (L)	Stormont–Dundas– Charlottenburgh	Brownell, Jim (L)
Northumberland	Rinaldi, Lou (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (L) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Oak Ridges	Klees, Frank (PC)	Thornhill	Racco, Mario G. (L)
Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Mauro, Bill (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior– Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	Ramsay, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs / ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (L) Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Research and Innovation / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (L) Minister of Health Promotion / ministre de la Promotion de la santé	Toronto Centre–Rosedale / Toronto-Centre–Rosedale	Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (L) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Ottawa–Orléans	McNeely, Phil (L)	Trinity–Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Ottawa–Vanier	Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (L) Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones	Vaughan–King–Aurora	Sorbara, Greg (L)
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Waterloo–Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Parkdale–High Park	Kennedy, Hon. / L'hon. Gerard (L) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Willowdale	Zimmer, David (L)
Parry Sound–Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Perth–Middlesex	Wilkinson, John (L)	Windsor–St. Clair	Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (L) Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre des Finances, président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
Peterborough	Leal, Jeff (L)	York Centre / York-Centre	Kwinter, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (L) Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge	Arthurs, Wayne (L)	York North / York-Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
Prince Edward–Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	Cordiano, Hon. / L'hon. Joseph (L) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Yakabuski, John (PC)	York West / York-Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
Sarnia–Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Nepean–Carleton	Vacant
Sault Ste. Marie	Oraziotti, David (L)	Toronto–Danforth	Vacant
Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Duguid, Brad (L)	Whitby–Ajax	Vacant
Scarborough East / Scarborough-Est	Chambers, Hon. / L'hon. Mary Anne V. (L) Minister of Children and Youth Services / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse		
Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)		
Scarborough–Agincourt	Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (L) Minister of Government Services / ministre des Services gouvernementaux		
Scarborough–Rouge River	Balkissoon, Bas (L)		
Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)		
Simcoe–Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
St. Catharines	Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L) Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader / ministre du Tourisme, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées, leader parlementaire du gouvernement		
St. Paul's	Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L) Attorney General / procureur général		
Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)		

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

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

CONTENTS

Tuesday 28 March 2006

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Health care	
Mr. Wilson.....	2433
Ontario budget	
Mr. Dhillon.....	2433
Ms. Smith.....	2434
Mrs. Witmer.....	2434
Mr. Brownell.....	2435
Domestic violence	
Mr. Jackson.....	2433
Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion	
Ms. Horwath.....	2434
Insulin pumps	
Mr. Gravelle.....	2435
Leader of the Opposition	
Mr. Wilkinson.....	2435

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

Standing committee on estimates	
The Speaker.....	2435
Reports deemed received.....	2436

FIRST READINGS

Kevin's Law (Child and Family Services Statute Law Amendment), 2006, Bill 83, Mr. Jackson	
Agreed to.....	2436
Carcinoid Cancer and Neuroendocrine Tumours Awareness Month Act, 2006, Bill 84, Mr. Craitor	
Agreed to.....	2436
Mr. Craitor.....	2436

MOTIONS

Committee sittings	
Mr. Caplan.....	2436
Agreed to.....	2436
House sittings	
Mr. Caplan.....	2436
Agreed to.....	2437

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

Energy conservation	
Mrs. Cansfield.....	2437
Mr. Yakubuski.....	2439
Mr. Hampton.....	2439
Immigration website	
Mr. Colle.....	2438
Mrs. Witmer.....	2439
Mr. Marchese.....	2440

ORAL QUESTIONS

Ontario budget	
Mr. Hudak.....	2440, 2441
Mr. McGuinty.....	2440
Mr. Duncan.....	2441

Autism treatment	
Mr. Hampton.....	2442
Mr. McGuinty.....	2442
Mr. Kennedy.....	2442

Aboriginal affairs	
Mr. Hampton.....	2443
Mr. Ramsay.....	2443

Government advertising	
Mr. Runciman.....	2444
Mr. Phillips.....	2444

Property taxation	
Mr. Prue.....	2444
Mr. Duncan.....	2445
Mr. Yakubuski.....	2447
Mr. McGuinty.....	2447

Democratic renewal	
Mr. Arthurs.....	2445
Mrs. Bountrogianni.....	2445

Agriculture funding	
Mr. Barrett.....	2446
Mrs. Dombrowsky.....	2446

Hospital funding	
Mr. Prue.....	2446
Mr. Smitherman.....	2446

Highway 410	
Mr. Kular.....	2447
Mr. Takhar.....	2447

National child benefit supplement	
Ms. Horwath.....	2448
Mr. Duncan.....	2448

Animal health laboratory	
Mrs. Sandals.....	2449
Mrs. Dombrowsky.....	2449

Tourism	
Mr. Arnott.....	2449
Mr. McGuinty.....	2449

PETITIONS

Special care homes	
Mrs. Munro.....	2450

Long-term care	
Mr. Crozier.....	2450
Mr. Miller.....	2451
Mr. Tascona.....	2451

Organ donation	
Mr. Hardeman.....	2450

Community mediation	
Mr. Delaney.....	2450
Mr. Flynn.....	2452

Macular degeneration	
Mr. Craitor.....	2451

Services for the developmentally disabled	
Mr. Jackson.....	2451

Social services funding	
Mr. Peterson.....	2451

Spring bear hunt	
Ms. Smith.....	2452

Public libraries	
Mrs. Munro.....	2452

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

2006 Ontario budget, government order number 11, Mr. Duncan	
Mr. Hampton.....	2453
Mr. Arthurs.....	2458, 2462, 2465, 2471
Mr. Miller.....	2460
Mr. Bisson... 2461, 2465, 2467, 2471	
Mr. Berardinetti.....	2461
Mr. Tascona.....	2461
Mr. Hudak.....	2462, 2466
Mr. Runciman.....	2466
Mr. McNeely.....	2466
Mr. Ramal.....	2470
Mr. Yakubuski.....	2470
Mr. Barrett.....	2471
Debate deemed adjourned.....	2471

ROYAL ASSENT

The Lieutenant Governor.....	2452
------------------------------	------

OTHER BUSINESS

MPAC report, Ombudsman	
The Speaker.....	2435

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Mardi 28 mars 2006

PREMIÈRE LECTURE

Loi Kevin de 2006 modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne les services à l'enfance et à la famille, projet de loi 83, M. Jackson	
Adoptée.....	2436
Loi de 2006 sur le Mois de la sensibilisation au cancer carcinoïde et aux tumeurs neuroendocriniennes, projet de loi 84, M. Craitor	
Adoptée.....	2436

QUESTIONS ORALES

Renouveau démocratique	
M. Arthurs.....	2445
M ^{me} Bountrogianni.....	2445

SANCTION ROYALE

Le lieutenant-gouverneur.....	2452
-------------------------------	------