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**Tuesday 25 April 2006**

**Mardi 25 avril 2006**

Speaker  
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président  
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 25 April 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE  
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 25 avril 2006

*The House met at 1845.*

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET MEASURES ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006

SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 18, 2006, on the motion for second reading of Bill 81, An Act to implement 2006 Budget measures and to enact, amend or repeal various Acts / Projet de loi 81, Loi mettant en oeuvre certaines mesures énoncées dans le Budget de 2006 et édictant, modifiant ou abrogeant diverses lois.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** When we last debated Bill 81, the member for Perth–Middlesex had the floor. I recognize the member for Perth–Middlesex once again.

**Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For those who are tuning in, we are talking about Bill 81, which is our budget bill.

It's interesting. In the debate that we are continuing, I know that one of our newest members, the member for Nepean–Carleton, was speaking to this debate. She gave her maiden speech, and I want to congratulate her for giving that maiden speech, and then subsequently she had a chance to respond to some of the comments that were made. I distinctly remember her commenting about the fact that she was a mother, and that's wonderful, that she has a baby, and that also is wonderful, and that she was the member in this House who had a child who was under five.

I think that's wonderful, but I caution the new member for Nepean–Carleton that it is important not always to rely upon those great researchers they have over at the PC caucus service bureau, because not all the time are they completely accurate. Although I am sure it is rare in her caucus to be a young mom, and I applaud that, on our relatively, I would say, more fertile side of the House, we have many young children. So for one member here to presume to speak for all parents in regard to the daycare issue, something on which we have a fundamental difference of opinion with the official opposition, who seem to take what I would say is perhaps the new Prime Minister's opinion that it isn't important to fund it and that it would be all right to rip up an agreement with our government on that, we have a different opinion, and we

are informed by the people in our caucus who have young children.

Just as a point of history, and I think for the interest of the people in Ontario, I see my good friend the member for Etobicoke North, who has two children. His daughter is four, turning five shortly, and his son is almost seven. So there's one.

Our member from Brampton West–Mississauga, Mr. Dhillon, has three children, all under five. One of them actually was born just before the last election, where he was successful, and then subsequently they've had yet another child, for a total of three.

My friend behind me, the member for Stoney Creek, was with child while she was campaigning, and she was able to deliver a beautiful little girl, Aylish, right before the election.

But we weren't done. No. We have been contributing to the economy of Ontario with young people. I know that my friend the member for Mississauga East and his wife, Christina, had twins, Sebastien and Alexander.

*Applause.*

**Mr. Wilkinson:** Yes, wonderful.

I know that my minister—I'm the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment—who is the member from Etobicoke Centre, did something quite historic. She, as a cabinet minister, also had twins, young Zachary and Ryan.

I want to say to my good friend the member from Kitchener Centre—they also were able to have, since we got elected, just recently—

**Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West):** He was married after he was elected.

**Mr. Wilkinson:** Yes, that's right. I say to my friend from Mississauga West, I believe he got engaged, asked his wife on the campaign trail, and they have subsequently married. Now they have a little boy, John Patrick, which I think is a fine name, actually.

So I have a grand total here, just since we formed the government, of some nine new little Liberals under the age of five in the province of Ontario, courtesy of the McGuinty government. I say with respect to the member for Nepean–Carleton that I don't think you should be lecturing us about the reality of parents today with pre-school children. What we believe, and I know what our Minister of Finance is fighting for, as well as our Premier, and our Minister of Children and Youth Services, is that the federal government should not rip up the agreement that we had with the previous government providing high-quality daycare for young parents who need it. I under-

stand that the Prime Minister is very clear about his five priorities, but I would say that when one has a \$13-billion surplus—and it's just a conservative estimate that the federal government is sitting on some \$13 billion in oil revenues—I would think that perhaps he could make his campaign commitment of \$100 to all parents who have children seven years or under and still not rip up the agreement signed in good faith between the federal government and the provincial government. I think those things are important.

**1850**

In regard to the budget, which is what we're speaking about this evening, it's an interesting time, I think, for those of us on this side of the House. And to my friends who are on the opposite side of the House but are with us, not only in spirit but as part of the great McGuinty government, I say to them, it's a fascinating time to be here.

Yesterday I had the opportunity to go to Stratford General Hospital, and at that wonderful hospital, part of an alliance—with Seaforth and Clinton, which are in the riding of my colleague the member from Huron—Bruce and also St. Marys Memorial and Stratford General Hospital. They have been working very hard to reach an accountability agreement, the new accountability agreements that we have instituted so that there can be a mature relationship between the provincial government that provides the funds and the hospitals and those wonderful health care workers who provide the care that we need in hospitals on, as we agree, some of the best days and, again, some of the worst days of our lives. We count on those people.

**Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough):** Is that the one John Tory was trying to malign?

**Mr. Wilkinson:** Exactly. I heard the Leader of the Opposition go on about—and I said quite clearly that I think he is sometimes a factual cherry picker. I say that without any hesitation because I think it's important to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth in this House.

**Mr. Leal:** Maybe it was the same researcher.

**Mr. Wilkinson:** Well, it could be one of those researchers, absolutely. I say to the member from Peterborough, there seems to be a lack of acuity over there in regard to getting the whole story. Of course, we have the media here, who are busy squirreling away, trying to get the whole story, trying to be balanced, but perhaps PC caucus research's approach isn't as balanced as we would like. Fortunately, we live in a democracy and we can all come here and perhaps square up the record.

At this wonderful hospital, part of a unique and effective alliance, the accountability agreement has been signed. In my home community and in the other three rural communities that are affected, it was discovered through this process that those hospitals are extremely efficient, that they know how to cut their costs, but there is no way, given the current formula, that they could provide all of the clinical services required for the amount of money proposed by the government. Under

accountability, both sides signed—both the hospitals, who are accountable for how the money is spent, and the province, our government, as to the amount of money they received. I was very happy to join my friend the member from Huron—Bruce to announce that there had been an increase of some \$5.1 million into the operating budgets across that four-hospital alliance.

Do you know how that happens? It doesn't happen if you're running around telling people, "I can cut taxes, and it won't hurt a bit." Where have we heard that? We were elected, and this budget reflects, I think quite passionately and accurately, what we were elected to do, which is to be honest with people about what the costs are, to show them what they are, to spend that money wisely and to get results. We cannot constantly underfund health care and expect to have better results.

I think what we've learned is that you can't get elected dogcatcher in this province by running around saying that you believe in two-tier medicine. That is not a viable political proposition because the vast majority of people would not want us to tinker with something that makes us Canadian. But I think there is a way to do that, and I think the Supreme Court in the recent Chaoulli decision showed us how to do that. If you're a government that says, "Do you know what? I'm going to cut taxes. I'm going to get rid of that health care premium. I'm going to cut some \$2 billion out—"

**Interjection:** It's \$2.4 billion.

**Mr. Wilkinson:** It'll be \$2.4 billion if they ever have the chance to implement this, and we're working very hard to make sure that doesn't happen. You could set up the preconditions so that the waiting lists are so long that people would go to court in this great country and say to the Supreme Court, "My God, the government is not willing to fund this adequately. It's so bad it's putting my own life at risk." The Supreme Court will come along and say, "Oh, well, you have a constitutional right to save your life," and therefore open up the door to privatization. Therefore, a party would be able to achieve its political end of having two-tier medicine without actually having their fingerprints on it. All they would have to do is run around and tell people that they can cut taxes and it won't hurt a bit. But if the result of that is people dying in hospitals because of waiting times, what we need to do is focus our efforts to try to get those waiting times down.

I'm happy that in the hospital in Stratford—I said just the other day—the time required for knee surgery is down 102 days. That takes a government that's willing to take money and put it into health care. That's what is required. To have hospitals with balanced budgets means we have to have a new realistic arrangement, based on the facts, with our health care providers. That's important.

I think many of us on this side of the House believe that we have to spend the money on health care. I also say to the member from Nepean—Carleton, who is new to this place, who came in and talked about integrity and accountability, and isn't Stephen Harper a wonderful person? He's bringing in all of this accountability and that we should take some lesson from them.

We took a lesson on our side of the House. We took our lesson from Ernie Eves. We took our lesson from the Magna budget. That's where we took our lesson, that if you turned around and walked away from hundreds of years of parliamentary tradition, and instead of having the people's budget in the people's place you did it at a car manufacturing factory, you would end up in a condition where the opposition would not be able to have that document here in this House, in front of estimates, where it's supposed to be.

I always wondered, why did they do that? Why would the Conservative Party, a party founded on the conservation of traditions, throw away hundreds of years? I think it's plainly obvious now. The numbers didn't add up, and the last thing they needed to do was to have that document in this Legislature where a vigorous opposition would be able to challenge that.

I know that this budget has been presented in this place where it belongs. As long as we form the government, the budget will be here in the Legislature.

It's also important that when we first formed the government, instead of listening to those who are somewhat more narrow-minded and somewhat more Machiavellian, who counselled the government not to bring in the transparency act and said, "No, we need to leave and reserve to us the same option to do unto others what has been done to us," and that we should somehow not be accountable to the people, we said, "No, we will fix election dates." It will be October 4, 2007, my daughter's 19th birthday. We're looking forward to it.

As well, six months before that, our newly empowered Auditor General—not the Provincial Auditor. We've given him more powers. The newly empowered Auditor General will write a report on the state of the books of the province of Ontario. All three political parties had best make sure their campaign commitments are based on one set of common facts that have been independently assessed, not by some economist hired by a political party, no, but by the Auditor General.

I say to the member for Nepean–Carleton, accountability and transparency are something we were elected to do because of what was going on by the previous government. What goes around comes around. The power that has now been given at the federal level is mimicked by what we have here in the province. I think all of us in this House would agree that the standards we have here and the officers of the Legislature here are a model that could be used at the federal level.

I give credit to our former colleague Mr. Baird, who is the chair of the Treasury Board in Ottawa. I think he's taken his experience from this place where we have an Integrity Commissioner who's an officer of this Legislature, who's independent from the Legislature, who's eminently qualified, a retired justice, someone who's independent—not the government of the day's friend but actually someone who's completely independent—who has been able, I think for all of the members here, to provide us with wonderful, wise counsel about ensuring

that we are always trustworthy to the people who elected us, to the province and particularly to this institution.

**1900**

In conclusion, I just want to say that we on this side of the House look forward to this debate. Moreover, we look forward to passing this bill, because we have people in our ridings—not just our ridings, but ridings across the province, all 103 of them—who are demanding and expect better health care. That requires money. They want better services in their publicly funded schools. They don't want money going to private schools; they want public money being used to fund public schools. They want us to do whatever we can to help grow this economy, because social justice comes from economic growth, not the other way around. It is important for us, as stewards of the economy, to grow that economy so that we can have greater social justice, not less. I know that my friends in the third party struggled with the whole issue of how difficult it is when an economy is in decline and your expenses are going up as you try to be just. We must try as best we can to avoid that. That's why, from those lessons, which I think have been quite publicly acknowledged by former Premier Bob Rae over the last few days, those formerly with another party and now with the Liberal Party—

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Wilkinson:** I think it's interesting: There are few mea culpas that I have seen in this place—

**Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** Where's the book?

**Mr. Wilkinson:** I say to my friend from Nickel Belt that I'm sure we can get you an autographed copy of that book.

We are looking forward to seeing this budget passed. I think the people are waiting for it. It's time to debate and then get on with it.

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka):** It's my pleasure to respond to the speech by the member from Perth–Middlesex. I see him smiling over there. I'm having a tough time, having listened to it, not smirking as well. He did spend an awful lot of time talking about children. I'm not quite sure what that has to do with Bill 81, the budget bill we are talking about tonight. I would like to point out, though, just for the record, that I have four children.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Miller:** No, they're not that young, but I have four children, just so it's on the record.

We're talking about a budget bill, Bill 81, An Act to implement 2006 Budget measures and to enact, amend or repeal various Acts. Let me remind those out there watching that the budget that was brought in by this government was another deficit budget, another Liberal deficit budget. Despite the fact that we had an extra \$3 billion in revenue that they didn't plan on a year ago, we still had a deficit budget. This is what Liberals do. The member from Mississauga South, whose father was Premier in the past Liberal government, did the same thing—the same thing.

**Mr. Tim Peterson (Mississauga South):** Brother.

**Mr. Miller:** Sorry. Correction: The member from Mississauga South's brother was Premier. What did he do? He did the same. Tax-and-spend Liberals: They just can't hang on to the money; they have to spend it. You're proving the fact. Liberals just don't know how to hang on to money. So here we have a deficit, despite the fact that you have \$3 billion of extra revenue.

Now, we are talking about Bill 81, so I would also like to point out, in the 20 seconds I have left, that hidden in this bill is switching the term of office for municipal councillors from three to four years. I would like to raise the concern I have heard from some municipal councillors that that may be a negative in terms of getting some of the older councillors in smaller municipalities and rural areas to stand for office.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East):** I too want to make some comments on the remarks by the member from Perth–Middlesex. I have to say that I found it quite interesting that the member talked about how certain governments were perhaps obscuring their intentions. I think he was particularly talking about tax cuts which led to problems in the health system, which then led to privatization.

Interestingly enough, not only did most of these problems occur under successive federal Liberal governments in terms of underfunding of health care, but that aside, this government decided to do the very same thing, except enshrine it through legislation. In fact, the debate this afternoon on Bill 102 spoke about the government's intention to remove themselves from responsibility for certain activities, to try to distance themselves from the decisions they are making, and they've done that through the drug legislation that was debated today. We've also seen them do the same thing in the LHINs legislation, where they are removing themselves by establishing these other organizations to undertake the activities they used to be directly accountable for. So I find it passing strange that the member can get up and talk about the motives of other governments, notwithstanding the fact that the health dollars he is talking about were cut by his own Liberal Party; federal Liberals, mind you, but nonetheless still Liberals who were in control of those budgets for a very long time in Canada.

Notwithstanding all of that, the member wanted to talk about some issues around children. What I would like to know is where this provincial Liberal government's commitment to child care is, when they are not spending, they are not investing, they are not establishing a provincial leadership role in the child care system for Ontario. They promised \$300 million during their election campaign, and here we are: This is their last full budget, Bill 81, the implementation of their last full budget as the government, and they still have not invested a dime of the \$300 million they promised for child care in Ontario. Shame on them.

**Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion):** I'm not going to spend too much time on the issue of child care, except to say that we're very proud of our

track record on child care. The NDP, quite frankly, should be ashamed of themselves for their role in bringing down the previous federal government, which brought forward a sensible national child care program.

On budget 2006, I am proud to support this budget for a number of reasons. First of all, as a former municipal politician in the city of Ottawa, I experienced the constant downloading by the previous government that occurred. This government has not downloaded one single dollar or responsibility to the municipal sector; in fact, we are uploading: I was pleased to announce \$5.3 million for the city of Ottawa for land ambulances; 65% of public health care costs are being uploaded, and it's going up to 75%; in my city, well over \$30 million in gas tax, which is an investment in public transit, in OC Transpo.

Also, our government and our Premier said on the weekend that we are committed to fixing the mess of the property assessment system that the previous government brought in. There were eight separate bills, and we all remember the chaos that created. It was not a transparent system; it was not a fair system. The system has these huge spikes that force people out of their homes. We have to do something about the property assessment system and end some of the chaos and confusion.

I am proud to support the budget because of what it does for the local economy and the local communities. It does not surprise municipal governments or municipal councillors or mayors like previous governments did. It is a sensible blueprint that, quite frankly, respects municipal government.

I support the four-year terms. If it is good enough for provincial and federal politicians, it should be good enough for the municipal sector and treats them with the greatest respect.

**Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford):** I am very pleased to respond to the comments of the member from Perth–Middlesex about Bill 81. I was very pleased that he finally decided to get into Bill 81 after about half of his speech. What is family? Family is important. I think he knows how many children every one of the members of the Liberal caucus has, and that is really commendable. Quite frankly, as the father of four children, I can tell you that the issue he is talking about has both sides, and everybody is going to debate that issue.

We need to talk about the importance of this Budget Measures Act. I am going to be speaking on this bill in a few moments—I want to get into it in greater length—but I want to speak about the fiscal record of this government. We're talking about the budget. The fiscal record of this government is very clear. They have had three consecutive deficit budgets. They have increased the provincial debt in excess of \$11 billion. Right now, \$9 billion of the budget, which is in excess of \$80 billion, basically goes to interest payments, and they have done nothing to address the fiscal situation of this province.

They also brought in the health tax, which most people in this province do not like. They feel it is something that should not have had to be brought in. Ian Urquhart of the

Star indicated that they did not have to bring in that tax. But I don't see cancelling the health tax anywhere at all in Bill 81. It is something that is regressive, hurts families and hurts people on the lower-income margins of our society. There is nothing in the bill to deal with the health tax.

**1910**

**The Acting Speaker:** That concludes the time available for questions and comments. I return to the member for Perth—Middlesex. He has two minutes.

**Mr. Wilkinson:** I want to thank the members from Parry Sound—Muskoka, Hamilton East, Ottawa West—Nepean and Barrie—Simcoe—Bradford for their responses.

We had a chap, a former Premier by the name of Bob Rae, who has gotten up publicly and said, "Do you know what? Mea culpa. When my economy was going down beyond my control, what I decided to do was just borrow, borrow, borrow. I got halfway through my term and realized that I was wrong." He was replaced by a government that said, "Do you know what we're going to do? We're going to have tax cuts by borrowing money.

As I said in the debate, I had Roger Martin appear before our standing committee that was doing our pre-budget consultations. The dean of the Rotman School of Business has confirmed for us that the mistake that was made by the previous government—not the previous, previous government, but the previous government—was that they funded tax cuts with borrowed money; not tax expenditures, but tax cuts. As the Minister of Finance said, the only surplus we have is a surplus of deficits: a fiscal deficit, an energy deficit, a social justice deficit and an infrastructure deficit. In each and every budget we present, we are dealing with those issues.

We have been able to bring down the fiscal deficit we inherited by some 75%, and we have ensured that no future government, including ours, can go to the people with a cooked set of books. They will be independently verified, and all parties will have to deal with that reality politically. They will not be able to cherry-pick the financial numbers they're going to use.

We've dealt in great measure with the infrastructure deficit we had around education, health care and, in this last budget, infrastructure, I say to the members opposite who say that we should have balanced two years early that they are therefore opposed and will vote against the expenditure of all the money for the roads, bridges and public transit that are vital to our economy and vital to the environment.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr. Tascona:** I'm very pleased to join the debate on Bill 81. I just want to comment on the remarks made by the last speaker on the investment of the Liberal government in public transportation. What a joke. Today, when you're driving down the highway—I come in from Barrie—the highway is completely blocked all the way from Barrie; the highway is completely blocked on 401 east. You just did a fabulous job. That's every day. You've done nothing to relieve gridlock. There have been no investments whatsoever to deal with that.

Something you could have done with respect to dealing with public transportation was expand GO Transit to the city of Barrie, something that would have been positive for the environment and positive for the congestion on Highway 400, to relieve the congestion in that area. But no, they haven't done anything on that particular file since they became the government. The GO Transit people want to come up to the city of Barrie, but the Liberal government is not moving on that file to make sure we get GO Transit. Why? That's just part of their failure, a massive failure, with respect to how they're dealing with public transportation and highways in this province. It's just not acceptable to say we are investing in public transportation when the highways are a mess, we've got gridlock and nothing has been done after three years.

I want to comment again on the fiscal record of this government—I'm being generous in terms of calling it a fiscal record. The fact of the matter is, they have three consecutive massive deficits in the billions of dollars. They could have balanced the books in this particular budget, but they chose not to; they chose to spend all the money. Quite frankly, they proved that the health tax, which has been levied on every family and person of this province, in the thousands of dollars per family, wasn't necessary. And yet we have this.

I go back to 1989, when the Treasurer of the day was Bob Nixon, who said, "I am getting rid of the OHIP tax. It's not a fair tax. We're getting rid of it." That was the Liberal government of 1989. Here we have Dalton McGuinty, who comes in in the year 2003 and says, "I'm not going to raise your taxes," gets elected on that particular promise and, sure enough, the biggest income tax increase—because that's where it is, this health tax, on your income tax; that's where they take it off—and what have we got for it? Nobody knows what we got for it because the waiting lists are just as long as they've always been.

We have a problem at the RVH. I just want to comment that on the side there is my good friend the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka, and we played in a hockey game against NHL stars on Friday night. The hospital launched its public campaign. They've raised over \$20 million towards the RVH expansion. That expansion is very much needed—also because it includes radiation therapy for cancer, but it's needed and it's needed now. I am very confident they are going to have the money raised that they need for this particular project in this fiscal year, and it's not acceptable that they have to wait and the people of Simcoe county and Parry Sound—Muskoka have to wait until 2008 before that expansion can even begin to be constructed, when the fundraising has been successful and the money is there in place. That hospital had many code greys in this particular fiscal year, and it's just not acceptable in terms of the treatment that the people in this area are getting with respect to their health care.

I also want to talk about schedule J of this particular bill. This bill has so many sections. It has 17 different

acts. It goes from schedule A to schedule O. It's dealing with all kinds of different things. This is a hodgepodge in terms of a budget measures bill. I think the reason they did it that way is so—it's kind of confusing; you can't catch your eye in terms of what's really going on. But one of them is schedule J, in which the Ontario Loan Act, 2006, is enacted. It authorizes the crown to borrow a maximum of \$4 billion. What are they borrowing \$4 billion for that they need in this particular part of the bill? They are already bankrupt in terms of how they have been handling the finances of this province, and now they're giving themselves carte blanche to borrow \$4 billion. It sounds to me like they're basically getting ready to dip out the honey before we get into the next election on October 4, 2007, when they will have destroyed the fiscal record of this province. By that time they will have destroyed the economy.

Every family out there today is suffering from high hydro bills, from consumer gas bills, from increased municipal taxes and from the gas prices that have been going up for automobiles. All those things are hitting people in the pocketbook, and this government believes that if they increase all these energy prices, make sure everybody is paying more than they ever have for municipal taxes, the economy is just going to keep on chugging along. Well, I've got news for this government: It's not going to happen that way. You cannot take billions and billions of dollars out of the economy and expect it to continue to grow. It's just not going to happen. That's why what they're doing is so irresponsible with respect to the opportunities they have to balance the books when they have the money. They're not going to have that opportunity. It's going to be just like what they did to Bob Rae. It was the Liberal government of David Peterson that set up the train wreck when Bob Rae came into government and made sure that there was no way he was ever going to be able to balance those books, no way he was going to be able to survive the recession that would hit in the early 1990s up to 1995.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Tascona:** When I hear the members across the way, especially the member for Perth—Middlesex—it's obvious he's not supporting Bob Rae in the federal leadership race with the comments he makes about Bob Rae. But Bob Rae, whom I knew—I was in the House when Bob Rae was still here, not the members across the way. The Minister of Health Promotion likes to shoot off his mouth every time about certain issues. I can tell you right now that Bob Rae at least was a respected parliamentarian in this House. I don't think anyone across the way should be pointing fingers in terms of what his record was. Everybody knows what it is. Now that he's decided to go ahead as a Liberal—and I know the Minister of Health Promotion doesn't support him, but the bottom line is, he's out there running for the federal leadership, and why is he getting bashed across the way tonight? I just can't believe they're bashing Bob Rae when we're talking about Bill 81. It's unbelievable.

**1920**

Just to move back in terms of standards, they made this big thing about standards, about what they're doing in Ottawa. The reason they have standards in Ottawa is because the federal Liberal government at the time was stealing and robbing Canadians of all their money. Everybody knows what was going on in the Gomery report.

The bottom line is, they make comments about, "Oh, Ernie Eves did this," and all that. Well, Ernie Eves is about to be appointed by this government to be the chairman of the economic growth and research council for the Premier of Ontario. Ernie Eves is going to be appointed. They're making all these comments tonight about how Ernie Eves didn't have standards and whatever. Well, Ernie Eves has standards, and obviously the Premier recognizes that, even if his backbenchers across the way don't respect that. The fact of the matter is that Ernie Eves was the Premier of this province and he is now also going to be appointed chairperson of the economic growth and research council for this province. Obviously, that's a recognition, and I think he'll do a fantastic job in that position, and the citizens of Ontario are lucky that they have him. So I don't like to hear from across the way comments about Ernie Eves and his standards as a parliamentarian, because they have no right to do that, and they know that.

I want to get back to the bill. It's important that I talk about the bill and not some of the nonsense that was being spoken across the way about other measures, personalities and children and all that. I want to talk about the bill.

Here we have a bill that is a budget measures bill, and you've got to tell me—I haven't gotten an explanation from anyone. I respect the member for Perth—Middlesex. He's a very bright guy. But the bottom line is, what is schedule H doing in that bill? This is a budget measures bill. It says that it extends the term of office for a municipal politician and school board trustee from three years to four years. What's that doing in the bill?

I understand what they're trying to do. I would have thought that Minister Gerretsen would be the man to go ahead and push that forward and put it in one of his own bills. But they decided, "What do you want to do that for? Why do we want to follow normal procedure and do what the normal ministries do? Let's just throw everything in the damned bill and see what sticks." We've got a situation here, and I have to admit that I haven't heard a lot about it in my riding. I suppose, because I haven't heard anything, the municipal politicians are basically all in favour of getting their terms extended from three to four years. There may be some citizens out there who don't share that optimism and don't share the view that they should be going from three to four years, because it means that if they get stuck with a council they don't like, they're now stuck with them for four years, from three years. It's going to be even more painful to deal with a situation when you're dealing with municipal property taxes going up and a council that may not be



listening to you. That's a very strange place to have that. I don't know why they just don't take it out of the bill. I think it's worthy of a lot of discussion, because it's not just about the term; it's about other things in there that sort of require some clarification.

At schedule A—I'm just trying to find it in here. There are so many schedules in here, it's unbelievable. Here we are: schedule A. There's a provision in there—here we have it. In the background to this, it says that in a February 2006 speech to the Rural Ontario Municipal Association and the Ontario Good Roads Association, Premier McGuinty announced that his government is proposing a move to four-year terms for council members and school trustees, which could start with this fall's election. This measure was buried at page 147 of the budget papers and not highlighted in any of the budget speeches, budget news releases or backgrounders. The term of office for municipal councils and school boards has changed from three to four years. So it's not only municipalities, but it's also school boards going from three to four.

One thing that strikes me—and I have to get this clarified. I don't know whether any of the members across the way have even read this, but I want to read it because I think it might be instructive for them to maybe read the bill. Section 4 of schedule H says, "The number of years that a person who was convicted of a corrupt practice described in subsection 90(3) of the act is prohibited from voting is increased from four to five years after the voting day in the election in respect of which he or she was convicted."

I guess I've got to presume that means that person's right to vote in a municipal election is taken away for five years. I don't know why they're doing that. I think that requires some explanation because I don't—well, I guess the reason they're doing that is because they want to make sure that person perhaps doesn't run again and has no input on the council that person was on. I don't really know what the backing of that one is, but that's one of the other provisions that I find a little bit interesting, that it would be in a budget measures bill, because that's what we are dealing with here today. It's important that we keep a focus in terms of what they're trying to accomplish here in terms of the record of this particular government.

One other thing that happened today, and I was very proud to be there—as everybody knows, I am a very big supporter of Lake Simcoe. My colleague from Simcoe North and also my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka were at the reception for the Lake Simcoe act, which my friend from Simcoe North is promoting. He's going to be introducing this private member's bill for full debate on second reading on June 1.

Everybody knows that it is very important for us to maintain the integrity and the quality of all of our lake systems—but in particular because it affects my riding, Lake Simcoe, because of the growth that's been going on. We need to have managed growth to make sure that we do not impact our water supply, that we do not impact

the air we breathe, that we do not impact the water we drink, that we do not impact how our sewage system works because of the growth, because it has to be managed. I think that is one of the big balancing acts that has to go on.

That's one thing that the Liberal government was—and I think the member from Erie–Lincoln put that very correctly the other day, that the bill with respect to the greenbelt was based on political science, not actual science. I really don't know why they stopped the greenbelt at the boundaries of Newmarket and just before coming into my riding in Simcoe county and Parry Sound–Muskoka in terms of what they were trying to do. Not that I am an advocate of the greenbelt approach in terms of the way they stripped property rights from people and the way they went about it in terms of gerrymandering in terms of where they were going to put the greenbelt and whatever, but it's interesting that they decided they were going to leave one area open for what we call leapfrogging in terms of massive growth and whatever, especially around the sensitive areas of farmland, the sensitive areas of our water, the sensitive areas in terms of dealing with the air we breathe up in that particular part of the province. I just don't understand it in terms of that particular exercise. But that's something they decided to do.

I am a big supporter in terms of making sure that we maintain the quality of Lake Simcoe and not let it be impacted by growth that is not managed and not respectful of our environment and what we want to have as a quality of life in a particular area, as we have in Simcoe county and Parry Sound–Muskoka. I think it is important that we recognize that.

One thing I was a little bit surprised at in here—and it may be in here, and the Minister of Health Promotion could help me maybe—is in terms of the tobacco tax. I think there is something in there—yes, there we go. Schedule O: the Tobacco Tax Act. That minister is against smoking, and that's to his credit in terms of what that is, but that's a federal responsibility and he knows that, in terms of determining whether we can smoke. He also knows that it is a federal responsibility whether we can gamble in this province and do other things.

The tobacco enforcement amendments will be proposed to the Tobacco Tax Act to strengthen the Ontario tobacco-related enforcement activities, including enhancements to allow greater information-sharing among provincial, municipal and federal counterparts.

That's going to be interesting in terms of how we are going to do that, because everybody knows the history with respect to tobacco tax in this province, the problems we had back in the early 1990s with respect to smuggling and the crime that was occurring with respect to that particular product. It looks like we're going back to those days again in terms of having the high taxes across different jurisdictions and not a uniform policy. That's sort of the problem with respect to dealing with taxes on any particular commodity or in any particular jurisdiction, when other jurisdictions are not following suit

and they have lower taxes than you in particular areas that you're trying to deal with in terms of stamping out a particular problem. Certainly, that's something we're going to have to look at in terms of how they're going to go about these enforcement activities. I don't really know what they're going to be doing, but I certainly hope they're going to respect the rule of law. That's something we have to maintain in this province, the rule of law. I know that's something my good friend John Yakabuski, who has just joined me here, believes in, and in a strong way—a very strong way.

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I'm getting near the end of my address here. I know a lot of the members are a little disappointed, but I know they're going to be coming back at me; there's no doubt about it. The Minister of Health Promotion is looking for me. But I get the final say; he's got to remember that. I get the final say on the response here, and I'll be using it carefully.

Getting back to schedule E, in my riding there's a business being proposed with respect to ethanol. I notice that in schedule E it "removes a tax exemption for ethanol if there is a requirement under regulations made under the Environmental Protection Act that ethanol be added to gasoline." That's an interesting provision. I really don't know what it means, but I would have thought that they were trying to promote gasoline that is environmentally safe, gasoline that would be something that would create jobs in this province. This appears to be punitive in terms of removing a tax exemption. I'm very surprised that that is what's going to be happening here, because the Premier was on record about being the big ethanol man. Maybe he was smelling the ethanol when he made that statement, but I can tell you right now that this tax exemption being removed doesn't seem to make a lot of sense in terms of what they're trying to accomplish here. I think people have filled up and they've had ethanol as part of the gas they use. So I don't know why that would be something you would want to punish. I'm not really understanding that approach.

In conclusion, I think I've clearly set out my concerns with respect to my riding. I've clearly set out my concerns with respect to the fiscal record of this government and the concerns we have, as every family has in this province, with respect to economic growth.

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Ms. Martel:** One point that the member from Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford made that I want to focus on in my remarks is the health tax. He said, and he was right, that one of the promises made by the Liberals during the election, when Premier McGuinty was smiling into the camera, was that there would be no taxes, that a Liberal government wouldn't increase taxes. And lo and behold, just after the government is elected, the first thing that happens is that the government puts in place a health tax that is the biggest single hit to consumers in the province ever. But what was also interesting was that Mr. McGuinty had made a promise about a health tax or a health premium long before the election. I want to take

people back to a press release put out by the Liberal Party on January 25, 2002. It says, "Ontario Liberal Leader Opposes Scheme Put Forward by Eves, Stockwell." This happened during the first Conservative leadership campaign. "Ontario Liberals oppose the return of OHIP premiums because they are a tax hike on working families, says leader Dalton McGuinty.

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

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

*Interjections.*

**Ms. Martel:** Wait a minute. There's more:

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

Along came the Liberals—a new health tax. Now we're paying three times: out of your general tax, out of the health tax, and because of the delisting of OHIP services, eye exams, people are paying out of their own pocket too. My, my, my, Speaker.

**Mr. Wilkinson:** I say with all respect to my friend from Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford, sir, I don't remember Lake Simcoe ever being referred to in the budget bill whatsoever. To come and say that somehow we weren't on topic I think is stretching it. What we were talking about is responding to those allegations made by the new member from Nepean–Carleton. What we talked about is the fact that this government has learned hard lessons from the two previous governments. First, you can't borrow your way to prosperity. I say that to the NDP. No greater eminent expert on that could be your former Premier, Bob Rae, who has said publicly now that you were wrong. That's the first thing we learned.

The second thing we learned is that a party faced with a deficit decided to cut taxes, and no more eminent person than Roger Martin from the Rotman School of Management has said publicly to our committee that it was a mistake for the previous government to be borrowing money to pay for tax cuts. What was the end of that? A \$5.6-billion deficit.

I think the member from Nickel Belt conveniently forgets the fact that there was a \$5.6-billion deficit. So her plan would have been, what? I know that in Stratford alone when we announced, for our health care alliance, \$5.1 million, my friends in CUPE and OPSEU tell me that saved 120 good-paying jobs in my riding. I won't be voting against this budget. I know there will be members opposite who will vote against this budget, but they'll have to explain to the members of CUPE and OPSEU how they feel that's a mistake. They'll have to explain to business in this community that they do not feel we need to grow an economy so that we can afford social justice. It doesn't go the other way. You can't borrow your way

to prosperity, and you sure can't tax-cut your way to prosperity. There has to be balance, and this budget is about balance.

**Mr. Miller:** It's my pleasure to comment on the speech from the member from Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford. We are talking about Bill 81, a budget bill, although he did bring up a hockey game in Barrie, so I think I need to refer to that momentarily, and that is that last Friday night I had the pleasure of playing on a line with Mike Gartner and many other ex-NHLers for a very worthwhile cause, which was a fundraiser for the Royal Victoria Hospital. I didn't have to wait around too much for Mike Gartner. In fact, I'm still recovering from the game, a little stiff. I see our goalie, Mr. Delaney, from the legislative team. He wasn't there on Friday night, but he's probably a little stiff after Sunday night. A very worthwhile game. Bob McIntyre, the weatherman from the A-Channel was certainly the fan favourite. Mr. Tascona participated, and a lot of money was raised for a very good cause, the Royal Victoria Hospital.

Now back to this budget bill, Bill 81. As I previously mentioned in my last opportunity to speak, I have heard concerns about the four-year term that is part of this bill. I'm not quite sure where it came from. The Premier went to the OGRA/ROMA conference, and I think he must have felt a need to do an announcement, and out of nowhere came this announcement of a four-year term.

I will say that I've heard from the smaller municipalities in Parry Sound–Muskoka the concern that the four-year term will deter some people from volunteering to take part and run in the next election. In fact, in South River on the weekend I was speaking to some councillors there and right now they have nobody who's willing to run. Hopefully somebody's going to come forward.

This budget we're talking about is another deficit budget. Over the course of this government, there will be \$10 billion in extra debt that the people of this province have to pay for, more moneyed interest and less money to programs. That's what this McGuinty government is bringing to the people of Ontario, another, the third, deficit budget we've seen by this government.

**Ms. Horwath:** It's my pleasure to make a few comments on the speech by the member from Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford. I found it interesting that his initial remarks centred around the members of the government, the Liberal members across the way, whom he felt were launching personal attacks on certain previous members of this Legislature. Interestingly enough, the member from Perth–Middlesex was lauding those very same people in his remarks to the member from Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford, so I'm just trying to figure out what kind of schizophrenic analysis might exist on the other side of the House, particularly in reference to people who used to run this province as Premier who are now part of their club; let's put it that way. I find that very interesting.

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The other thing that was raised that I thought was extremely important was the issue of the extent to which this bill, ostensibly a budget bill, also has these schedules

attached that basically cover off a bunch of off-the-cuff comments or promises that the Premier made to various constituencies, particularly municipalities. I find it interesting, because I guess maybe the Premier has finally figured out how to get some of those promises dealt with without having to deal with them in an up-front way by having legislation specific to them in this House. Instead, he buries them in the backs of these bills and they get passed as schedules to things like budget bills.

Nonetheless, I think it's really important to acknowledge that in this debate it seems to be tax cutters, no tax cutters, but it's important for the Liberals to acknowledge that in fact they also are tax cutters in this very budget we're debating and have decided on a corporate or a capital tax giveaway that's mostly going to be helping the banks and the insurance companies. Shame on them. We need the money for other programs.

**The Acting Speaker:** And for the last word, the member from Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford.

**Mr. Tascona:** I'm ready to give my response. When the Minister of Health Promotion learns the rules in here, he'll recognize that there are responses to questions and comments, and I'm just here.

The member Nepean–Carleton is here. I want to recognize her, because she is a very strong new member. I think she spoke fantastically the other night. The member for Perth–Middlesex spent about half his speech talking about her. That's really quite the tribute. I think she's got a lot to offer to this place.

I just want to comment on the comments from the members for Nickel Belt and Hamilton East. The point is very clear: The health tax that was brought in here—you talk about a lack of standards, you talk about a flip-flop, you talk about shoving it right to the people of this province and doing it in writing. It's unbelievable what they did with the health tax. It's a tax hike on working families, that's for sure. It's in the thousands of dollars. And yes, the chiropractic, physiotherapy, vision care—we're paying for it all now. We're paying more and we're getting less. But the fundamental problem we've got here is dealing with the cancelled health tax. We could have cancelled the health tax in the last budget, except they decided to funnel it into Liberal ridings and waste taxpayers' money instead of giving it to all the people of this province by cancelling that health tax.

This budget is very disappointing. It's not balanced, as the member from Perth–Middlesex said it is; it's not balanced at all. I say this thing should be defeated.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Ms. Martel:** It's a pleasure for me to participate tonight in the debate on Bill 81. I'm going to be talking about some of what is in the budget bill and some of the things that should have been in the budget bill, given the promises that the Liberals made before and during the election to a number of constituencies.

First, let me deal with schedule I, which refers to the Ontario infrastructure act. That schedule merges the Ontario Strategic Infrastructure Financing Authority and the Ontario Infrastructure Projects Corp. Both these bodies

are playing an intermediate project management role in the private hospital financing that's going on under the Liberals.

I thought it was important, as I talk about P3 hospitals, to mention that the budget says there will be 11 new P3 hospital RFPs released this year. And what do we know about P3 hospitals? Well, what in fact do we know about what Premier McGuinty said about private financing of hospitals before the last election and during the last election? It's always good to remind people who are watching and members of the House what that promise was.

Here, from the Ottawa Citizen on Wednesday, May 28, 2003, a story by Rod McIver, and the quotes are the Premier's: "What I take issue with is the mechanism. We believe in public ownership and public financing" of health care, says Dalton McGuinty, leader of the Liberal Party.

The article continues with some more quotes: "Mr. McGuinty warned recently that if the Liberals are elected in the provincial election now expected in the fall, they will stop private sector financing of hospitals, the so-called P3s, which the Conservative government is pushing as the way of the future.

"Mr. McGuinty believes that public-private sector partnerships in health care would ultimately cost the province more money than traditional arrangements...."

What did he say during the election? Right smack in the middle of the 2003 campaign, to the Ottawa Citizen on Wednesday, September 24, Mr. McGuinty said the following, according to Dave Rogers, who did the interview: "Ontario Liberal leader Dalton McGuinty has said the" Royal Ottawa Hospital "expansion will go ahead because Ottawa needs a new psychiatric hospital, but a Liberal government would cancel the deal with the private consortium because public-private partnerships are a waste of money."

Well, well, well. Here we are. Before the election and during the election, Mr. McGuinty was saying private financing of hospitals is a waste of money. I agree. And what happened after the election? Well, after the election, there was a conversion on the road to Damascus, and that's mild, because after the election all of Mr. McGuinty's opposition to private financing went way out the window, and here we are this year facing the prospect of taxpayers' money being used for 11 RFPs for privately financed hospitals.

Mr. McGuinty was right. These schemes do cost more money. They cost more money because government, not private sector consortiums, gets the best borrowing rate for these kinds of massive construction projects—governments get the best borrowing rate. These private financing schemes cost more because the private sector consortiums are in it to make some money, a 15% to 20% profit for their work on these projects, and that profit margin is factored into the overall cost of the project. So now we have this spectre in Ontario of hospitals that are essentially going to have to pay a mortgage to private sector financing companies because Mr. McGuinty broke

his election promise and is now proceeding with private financing of these projects. That is money that should go into patient care, into new health programs, into new health services. We shouldn't be wasting this money going into the pockets of the private sector consortium members. I agreed with Dalton McGuinty before the election and I say now that he was right then. These schemes do cost more money.

The shame of it is, the people in the province of Ontario are going to get stuck with this higher bill because this Premier broke his promise. The estimate for the Brampton hospital alone of the additional cost for that project because of private sector financing versus the traditional method of public financing is \$175 million because of a private financing scheme. That's 175 million bucks that would be better spent on hospital services and health care programs and hiring new staff, particularly nurses.

I am completely opposed to the private financing of hospitals, like Mr. McGuinty was before the election. It's a shame—a shame—that in this budget 11 new privately financed hospitals are going to proceed with RFPs, which is going to suck so much money out of patient care into the profits of the consortiums involved in the building. Mr. McGuinty should keep this important promise.

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Schedule D of this bill is the schedule that reduces the rate of capital tax payable for 2007-08 by 5%, accelerating the phase-out of the capital tax. Eventually, eliminating the capital tax will cost the province of Ontario \$1.2 billion, most of which will go to the banks and the insurance companies in the province of Ontario, which hardly need it. I am opposed to this government's acceleration of reducing the capital tax. I am opposed to the capital tax reduction, period, because that kind of money, that \$1.2 billion, should be going to support social programs in the province, not going to support the chartered banks and the insurance companies, which surely don't need it and which surely have made enough profits in this province.

When you combine the acceleration of the capital tax reduction, which will be a \$1.2-billion cost to the treasury when it's fully implemented, with the \$3-billion windfall that the McGuinty government experienced this year because of increased revenue and lower debt payment, one has to ask, why didn't the government in this most recent budget keep the election promises that they made to the families in the province of Ontario?

Let me let deal first with the promise made by this government to end the clawback of the national child benefit. Here is the Election 2003 questionnaire from the Campaign Against Child Poverty. The question is, "Will your party make it a priority to end the clawback of the national child benefit supplement from families on social assistance?" The response from the Liberals during the election: "We will end the clawback of the national child benefit supplement. The clawback is wrong and we will end it. The Harris-Eves government has reinforced the cycle of poverty, not broken it."

During the same time, July 31, 2003, on Mr. McGuinty's letterhead is a letter to June Callwood and Rabbi Arthur Bielfeld, of the Campaign Against Child Poverty. He says in his 2003 letter, "Second, my team and I oppose the Conservative government's practice of clawing back the national child benefit ... a practice we will end during our first mandate."

What has the Liberal government done? A pathetic response by the Liberal government, given this serious promise and commitment. All that this government has done is pass on the inflationary increase that's attached to the supplement, whether it be 2% or 3%. This government hasn't fully ended the clawback. If they did that, families in this province would receive an additional \$1,500 a month. Instead, by passing on only the inflationary increase that's attached to the benefit, families are getting perhaps \$50 more a month when they are entitled to \$1,500. I remind this government that this isn't your money; this is federal government money, designated to go to the poorest families across Canada to get them out of poverty. You steal it back, dollar by dollar, from these families, from those people who are on social assistance and ODSP, and that is a disgrace. It is a despicable practice. It was a despicable practice under the Tories and it's just as despicable under you. Allowing families to receive the inflationary increase doesn't at all change how shameful it is.

This government's pathetic excuse for continuing to do that is that the clawed-back money from the national child benefit is used to pay for early childhood development initiatives in many communities. You know what? That was the case when the Liberals made the promise they did. We knew that's what that money was being used for. There were reports published every year across communities showing what that money was being used for when it was clawed back. So it was no surprise to this government, when they formed the government, that that money being clawed back was being used for early childhood development initiatives in many communities.

You know what? Credit to my community: Just last week, the board of health in my community, the city of greater Sudbury, passed a motion calling on this government to fully end the clawback, even though they do get money from this initiative. The motion says very clearly, "End the clawback and fund those early development initiatives like you promised in the first place." You know what? It would cost this government \$220 million—that's it—to end this disgraceful practice and ensure that the money being clawed back continues to support those early childhood development initiatives. This government should do what the city of greater Sudbury board of health is encouraging it to do: End the clawback like you promised. You had a \$3-billion surplus in this budget, more than enough money to do it. It is an absolute disgrace that this clawback practice continues, first under the Conservatives and now under the Liberals, especially given the election promise the Liberals made.

Why didn't the McGuinty Liberal government keep its promise on child care? Before the election, this is what

the Liberals had to say about child care. Again, this is the election 2003 questionnaire from the Campaign Against Child Poverty. The question is, "How will your party increase access to high-quality, licensed child care?" The answer from the McGuinty Liberals: "The Harris-Eves government has not put a penny into licensed child care. We are proposing an infusion of \$300 million." You know what? Since the election, the McGuinty Liberals have not put a single penny into child care. The money that has gone into child care in the province of Ontario has all been federal funds, federal dollars. Where is the \$300 million that was promised by the McGuinty Liberals before the election?

My colleague Mr. Prue, for two years in a row, at the end of the public hearings on the pre-budget consultations, when the committee has been writing its reports—for two years in a row, our finance critic, Mr. Prue, has moved a motion calling on the government to live up to the promise it made on child care. Last year, the motion said very specifically to invest \$300 million in child care like you promised. This year, the motion said to invest at least \$150 million in child care, at least half of what you promised. You know what happened with the Liberal members on the committee? They voted down that motion. Last year for \$300 million, this year for \$150 million. It wasn't us who made the promise of 300 million new dollars, it was the McGuinty Liberals before the election—a very clear election promise that this government has yet to live up to.

What's even worse is that if you look at the estimates for the Ministry of Child and Family Services, the proposal for this fiscal year is a 22% cut in Ontario's child care budget. So not only have we not seen the promised \$300-million investment; this year this government is going to cut 22% of the child care budget. That's some commitment to working families. That's some way to keep your election promise.

You know what? This government has no credibility—no credibility at all—in pointing the finger at the federal government with respect to child care. Your promise was clear. You had the money in this budget to deliver on that promise. It's time for you to keep your promise to Ontario families and invest the \$300 million you promised, not cut the child care budget this year by 22%, which is what is proposed in the estimates for the Ministry of Children and Youth Services.

In the face of a \$3-billion windfall, why didn't the Liberal government live up to the promise it made to residents of long-term-care facilities? The promises were very clear. Here is the Ontario Liberal plan for change. Here's the first promise: "Invest in better nursing home care, providing an additional \$6,000 in care for every resident." Has the government lived up to that promise? Here's what Donna Rubin has to say. She's the executive director of the Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors. Donna Rubin says the following: "Instead of the \$450 million promised, the provincial government has enhanced care to residents by only \$144 million. Instead of the \$6,000 per resident promised, care

funding per resident has been increased by less than \$2,000 a year thus far.” This with the third budget of this government, well into its mandate.

What did Karen Sullivan say? She is the executive director of the Ontario Long-Term Care Association. On April 3, 2006, Ms. Sullivan said, “It is clear that both families and residents strongly disagree with any perception that government has addressed long-term-care service levels and that, for them, this is an issue of care, respect and dignity for those who built this province.” This government is a third of the way to keeping its election promise for residents in long-term-care homes and their families. In this budget, with a \$3-billion windfall, why didn’t the McGuinty Liberals keep the promise they made for \$6,000 of additional care per resident per year in Ontario long-term-care homes?

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But the Liberals made a second promise to residents too, in the same Ontario Liberal plan for change. The second promise was ensuring that residents “get more personal care, including a minimum 2.25 hours of daily nursing care.” The Conservatives cancelled the minimum standard of care. It used to be 2.25 hours under the NDP. When the Conservatives got to government, they cancelled that. There is no minimum standard of care provided to residents in the province today that’s set in regulation.

The negative effect of that was seen very clearly in a study done by the Ministry of Health in 2001, which looked at Ontario, other Canadian jurisdictions, European and US jurisdictions, and clearly showed that Ontario ranked dead last in terms of the number of care hours that it was providing to seniors in terms of nursing care, physiotherapy, care for those seniors who had dementia. That’s what happens when you don’t have a minimum standard of care.

I’m assuming that’s why the Liberals promised in the last election that they would reinstate at least the minimum 2.25 hours of care that had been in place under our government. God knows, the frail and elderly going into long-term-care homes need even more care than that, but I’d be happy if this government would at least do what it promised. It hasn’t done that. There is no minimum standard of care. There is no regulation to regulate the minimum standard of care, despite the very clear election promise that the government made in its election platform, and also in a questionnaire that was sent out by the Service Employees International Union, which asked all parties:

“Will your government establish a minimum number of care hours nursing home residents must receive on a daily basis?”

“Yes. Ontario Liberals are committed to reinstating the standards of care for nursing homes that were removed by the Harris-Eves government—including minimum 2.25 hours of nursing care daily.”

With a \$3-billion windfall, one would think that this Liberal government could have kept its promise to the frail and elderly residents of our long-term-care homes to

reinstate a minimum standard of care by regulation and to provide adequate funding to homes to hire the staff necessary to ensure that that care was delivered. We know that staff are doing the best they can, but more hands are needed, and this government had the money to make a difference.

Finally, as I wrap up, let me just talk about autism very briefly. Everybody knows the promises this government made to families with autistic children. Do you know what’s interesting? I just got some more information from a freedom of information request about spending in the autism program. Did you know that in 2003-04, the total budget for the autism program was \$80 million? Did you know that \$36 million of that was underspent, that \$32 million of that was returned to the Consolidated Revenue Fund and that \$2.6 million was spent on other programs within the Ministry of Children and Youth Services? Did you know that under the Liberals, who claim to be so committed to children with autism, in 2004-05, \$89 million was the budget for autism: \$67 million was spent and \$21 million was instead diverted to other children’s programs within the ministry. Under the Liberal government, the money that you have budgeted for autism has not been spent; it has been returned to the Consolidated Revenue Fund or spent on other services in the ministry, at a time when hundreds of autistic children are on a waiting list needing IBI service. How can this government do that for two years in a row when the needs are so great and when the promise you made to these families was so, so clear?

**Hon. Mr. Watson:** Every time I listen to the NDP, I think they’re caught in some sort of time warp, because, quite frankly, the more I hear about the NDP in this Legislature and what they stand for, the more I realize and the public realizes how irrelevant they are, given the few number of seats that they have. I understand now why Bob Rae tore up his membership card and left that party running; I understand why Buzz Hargrove wasn’t crying crocodile tears when he was kicked out of the party for daring to disagree with the leadership. I think it’s disgraceful that the member is attacking the Royal Ottawa Hospital, which is going to be a publicly owned, publicly controlled hospital in my hometown.

Go and talk to George Langill, the former president, a great community builder; Paul Hindo, who was the chairman of the board; Jackie Holzman, one of my predecessors as mayor, who wrote a letter to the editor praising Premier McGuinty and this government for going forward.

The fact of the matter is that this hospital is needed in the community. For decades the patients in this hospital were treated in a substandard fashion, and we were able to strike a deal, working with partners to create a brand new hospital going up on Carling Avenue. We very much look forward to opening that hospital.

So to all of the employees, the patients, the supporters of the Royal Ottawa Hospital, I say that I apologize on behalf of the NDP for attacking this very worthwhile project and this very important investment in the city of

Ottawa. I'm proud to be part of a government that has seen investments in the Queensway Carleton Hospital, the Ottawa Hospital, CHEO, the Montfort Hospital, the Royal Ottawa Hospital. All of these fine facilities are finally getting their fair share, thanks to this government. And to have the NDP come around and attack this project on ideological grounds makes no sense at all.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville):** Speaker, since this is a budget bill, it gives us, as you know, some latitude in terms of the commentary that we can offer during debate, and I want to spend a few minutes on Caledonia.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Runciman:** I know the member opposite doesn't want to speak to this issue, but I think it's a prime example of the lack of leadership of the Liberal government with respect to the crisis that that community is facing. It has impacts right across the province with respect to the fact we saw the CN and Via line closed down for several days, which had an economic impact of millions and millions of dollars on the economy of this country. I understand that as of today there have been no charges laid, and we see the lack of leadership of the Premier with respect to not moving on this issue for well over a year when he had information as a government with respect to the potential for difficulties in this area.

This is an environment that was created to a significant degree by the people sitting on the other side of the House, with the tragedy at Ipperwash and the attacks that the members of the Liberal Party made on the government of the day with respect to that situation, accusing the members of the government of directing police.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Runciman:** A totally false charge, which will be borne out by the findings of the inquiry.

But we should have an inquiry into this situation, I believe, at the end of the day. We don't know where this is going to end up, but it could be an extremely serious situation which could spread right across the province and right across the country because of the ineptitude of this government, its failure to act and its failure to give leadership in a very difficult situation.

We have a community that's worked well together for decades and is now facing serious divisions because of the failure of leadership of the Liberal government.

**The Acting Speaker:** It might be helpful for the—

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Runciman:** It's because of the false attacks and lies from you guys.

**The Acting Speaker:** I would ask the member for Leeds–Grenville to withdraw that most unparliamentary comment.

**Mr. Runciman:** I withdraw.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

There's one other thing I would like to clarify. Yes, it is a tradition of this House that there is considerable latitude on budget debates and, to some extent, latitude on budget bills, but questions and comments are expected

to relate in response to what the member who had the floor presented by way of a speech.

**Ms. Horwath:** I'm certainly going to stick to comments around the issues that were raised by the member from Nickel Belt. But I think it's interesting to note that the Minister of Health Promotion, or the minister of photo ops and awards actually, was quite critical of the member from Nickel Belt when complaining and remarking that somehow New Democrats had no credibility when, in fact, it seems to me it was the Liberals who came up empty in the last couple of by-elections that happened just recently, because of the emptiness that this government is showing in regard to its commitment to keep its promises. I think that is pretty much the content of what the member from Nickel Belt was raising. I can list them off, for those who happened to miss that excellent speech, but it's about going back on promises around private financing of hospitals.

Before the election, McGuinty was against it; after the election, they're in, every chance they get, for more private deals on hospitals and other infrastructure projects. It's about broken promises around the clawback. Before the election, commitments all the way down the line, "Yes, we're going to end the clawback," and shame on them; they still haven't done so. It's about backing away from commitments on not only funding child care to the tune of \$300 million, which they haven't yet done, but then going ahead this year and cutting the child care budget by 22%. That's what the member from Nickel Belt was raising. Also, commitments broken: Before the election, they were committed to funding long-term care at better levels and also creating a minimum standard of nursing care for residents; nothing has happened on that file either.

So it's not surprising that the minister is feeling a bit prickly. Shame on them for every single issue that the member from Nickel Belt raised.

**2010**

**Mr. Delaney:** It's always interesting to follow the member from Nickel Belt, not merely to provide a reality check but also to assure Ontario that in fact the sky is not falling.

My hospital in Mississauga is Credit Valley. When Credit Valley Hospital opened 21 years ago, we had 365 beds. Today, we still have 365 beds, but we're getting an expansion. Phase 2 starts next year. I had the privilege of announcing that expansion last summer.

The member from Nickel Belt calls this badly needed hospital expansion—and let me use her own words—a shame. We have 5,000 babies annually being born in a facility designed for 2,700. I knocked on doors three years ago and said we could do better. So next year our government will keep the commitment I made in 2003, and the construction cranes will go up. The project will be publicly funded, publicly accountable and publicly run. The project manager works on staff for Credit Valley. Whatever firms win competitive bids to build phase 2 will be suppliers, not owners, not partners, not

anything else. And that's where Mississauga's provincial taxes are going.

That's the direction our government is taking in communities like Mississauga. We're able to build the hospitals we need, because the average Ontario hospital is 40 years old. But the member from Nickel Belt thinks that's a shame.

We in Mississauga live in choking traffic, but that's going to get better when we have our new Lisgar GO train station open next year. That's how our government has served Mississauga, by addressing first Ontario's health care deficit in 2004, then Ontario's education deficit in 2005, then Ontario's infrastructure deficit this year, and next year, to address Ontario's fiscal deficit. Four deficits, four years: That's what responsible government is and that's what Ontario has got.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Nickel Belt has two minutes to reply.

**Ms. Martel:** The shame is that the Liberals would have said anything to get elected in 2003—and they did—when they had no intention of keeping any of the promises they made. The reason the Minister of Health Promotion was so prickly over this tonight is because all these broken promises by the Liberals speak to the credibility of this government. And this government has no credibility when it comes to the many, many broken promises that are its legacy, especially promises to families.

Let's go back to the promise that Mr. McGuinty made to the people in Ottawa: "Ontario Liberal leader Dalton McGuinty has said the ROH expansion will go ahead because Ottawa needs a new psychiatric hospital, but a Liberal government would cancel the deal with the private consortium because public-private partnerships are a waste of money." That's what your leader said in your community. That was the promise made. He should be publicly financing the expansion, like he promised, because that way, needed dollars for health care aren't going to get sucked up by the private sector consortium. That's the same in Ajax and the same in my community and every other community that now has a privately financed hospital, when your leader promised these would go ahead as publicly financed projects.

Here's another promise that's been broken: "We will end the clawback of the national child benefit supplement. The clawback is wrong and we will end it. The Harris-Eves government has reinforced the cycle of poverty, not broken it." And you've reinforced the cycle of poverty even more by not ending the clawback like you promised.

Here's the promise on child care: "The Harris-Eves government has not put a penny into licensed child care. We are proposing an infusion of \$300 million." We haven't seen one new penny for child care in the province. Instead, this year there is going to be a 22% cut to the child care budget in the province of Ontario.

What's really gotten the Liberals here this evening is that they don't like to hear about all the promises that

were made to win the election, and to know that most of those haven't been kept.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry–Prescott–Russell):** Mr. Speaker, I'll be sharing my time with the Minister of Health Promotion. I'll be speaking on the content of the bill.

This legislation enacts commitments arising from our 2006 budget. We are proud of our third budget, which continues to focus on health, education and post-secondary education while building a stronger economy through investment in infrastructure. This bill includes such important measures as the doubling of the tax credit for the hybrid rebate, granting the Minister of Natural Resources the power to provide grants from our forest prosperity fund, and an extension of the tax credit for foreign productions.

Here are some of the highlights of the bill. The film tax credit for foreign productions: amendments are being proposed to the Corporations Tax Act to extend the 18% tax credit rate for the Ontario production services tax credit for another year, from March 31, 2006, to March 31, 2007. The Ontario production services tax credit is a refundable tax credit available to qualifying corporations for qualifying Ontario labour expenditures in respect of eligible film and television productions. The extension of the 18% tax credit rate for another year reflects the government's commitment to support Ontario's film and television industry and to help ensure that it remains competitive.

In 2004, we announced a plan to eliminate the Ontario capital tax by 2012. In this year's budget, we announced that we would build on our original plan by accelerating the capital tax rate cut. Amendments are being proposed to the Corporations Tax Act to implement those measures proposed in the budget which would reduce the capital tax rates for 2007 and 2008 by 5% of the current rates. Further, we intend to fully eliminate the tax in 2010, a full two years earlier than planned, should the fiscal position of the province allow. Even though this portion is not included in Bill 81, it will be dealt with in future legislation.

By proposing to accelerate the tax rate cut, we are further enhancing Ontario's already competitive tax system. This is a key element in our strategy to promote new investment, economic growth and job creation.

Schedule H of the bill proposes to establish four years as the length of a term for council members and school board trustees. The proposed change would start with this fall's elections. Establishing a four-year term for local government representatives in Ontario is something AMO has asked the province to do, and we agree. Ontario would become the fifth province with a four-year term.

Les provinces qui actuellement ont des termes de quatre ans pour les municipalités sont le Manitoba, le Nouveau-Brunswick, la Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador, la Nouvelle-Écosse, et le Québec. Elles ont toutes actuellement des termes de quatre ans.



It's a matter of respect: We have fixed four-year terms at the provincial level, and federal terms can run a maximum of five years. Why should Ontario municipalities be any different? It's a matter of efficiency. A four-year term is the ideal period of time for a council to forge an agenda, implement it and then seek the people's judgment. This will require an amendment to the Municipal Elections Act.

**2020**

**The Acting Speaker:** I recognize the Minister of Health Promotion.

**Hon. Mr. Watson:** I always enjoy following my friend from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, which is, of course, the gateway to Ontario from his fine riding in the east of our province. I'm very pleased to talk tonight about the 2006 budget. It's a budget that I am proud to support and certainly will be voting for.

I want to just talk about some of the highlights of the budget that are going to have a positive impact throughout Ontario, but specifically in my home riding of Ottawa West–Nepean and my city of Ottawa. The Move Ontario program is a \$1.2 billion investment in public transit. We are very proud of the track record of the McGuinty government when it comes to supporting public transit. We understand the connection between gridlock and quality-of-life issues when people are stuck in traffic if we don't have a properly funded transit system.

For many years, under the previous government, there were severe cuts to OC Transpo in the city of Ottawa, to the point where 100% of all capital funding was eliminated. I am pleased to be part of a government that has put \$200 million on the table, matched by the federal government and the city government, for the light rail project that is going to serve parts of Nepean, going down to the downtown core. It's a very innovative proposal. There are obviously critics of the proposal. I, in the past, have had some concerns about particular routing and so on. But the fact of the matter is this is a priority that has been established by the city of Ottawa council, and we have put \$200 million on the table.

We've also provided, again, additional funds for gas tax revenue. A lot of people have said, and I saw a letter to the editor in the Ottawa Citizen the other day where an individual said, "Why doesn't the province cut the gas tax? Because they must be reaping great benefits as a result of high gas prices." Well, members of this House are undoubtedly aware of the fact that the gas tax that we have is a flat tax: Regardless of how expensive gasoline prices are, we don't get more money. The federal government, on the other hand, of course, reaps substantial amounts of money if the price of oil goes up. But we have taken two cents of each portion of the Ontario tax and put that back into public transit throughout Ontario. So any municipality or region that has a transit system, like OC Transpo, is benefiting. I believe the figure for Ottawa is well over \$30 million, when all is said and done, on an annualized basis that will be put into the operations of OC Transpo.

I also want to talk for a moment about the importance of tourism. I had the great pleasure of being the president of the Canadian Tourism Commission for about three years, a federal crown corporation—

**Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre):** The youngest one, ever.

**Hon. Mr. Watson:** The youngest president of a crown corporation—that was one of my claims to fame, the member from Kitchener Centre reminds me. I had the pleasure of going and visiting the good people in Pembroke. I've got to tell you a story. I see the member here from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. The very first time I had my name up in lights was at the Best Western Lodge in Pembroke. I was a guest speaker along with Mike Duffy. It wasn't quite Vegas, John, but it felt pretty good to see your name welcoming you into the city—a very warm, welcoming, hospitable group of people in the Ottawa Valley.

But we are concerned, obviously, as a number of tourism operators are—and we had an opportunity to meet with some folks from Niagara region—about potential border issues facing our country. I commend our Minister of Tourism for his aggressive stand in working with other states to ensure that we have a system in place that is not going to put our tourism industry in danger or jeopardy. Tourism is important in Ottawa. It's the third or fourth largest employer, for instance, and it creates economic growth, often creates a number of entry-level jobs for young people to get into the tourism industry. We welcome close to 20 million, if not more, visitors from the United States, and we have to make sure that the federal government continues to put pressure on the American federal government so that we are not going to see the kind of devastation which many of us have predicted if this passport issue is not resolved.

I'm also pleased that an additional \$424 million are going into the education system to help students succeed through our commitment to reduce class sizes from JK to 3. Schools in my riding, like Grant, Agincourt, Regina, Bayshore Catholic, Pinecrest, Briargreen—the list goes on and on—are great schools, but for too many years, the class sizes were too large. That was unfair to the students, unfair to the teachers, unfair to the whole education system. So this money is going to go a long way to hire additional teachers to ensure that we meet that cap of 20 students.

The new jobs and skills renewal strategy—and my friend the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities has done an excellent job of ensuring that education is at the forefront of our government's agenda. The Premier has said on many occasions that we're not always going to be able to compete with China and India when it comes to the wage battle, but we can when it comes to intelligence and innovation and ingenuity. Thanks to investments by Minister Bentley and our government, we've seen \$6.2 billion in new dollars go into post-secondary education. Those wonderful institutions in Ottawa—La Cité, Algonquin College, located in Ottawa—West Nepean, Carleton University, my alma mater,

Ottawa university, the alma mater of our Premier, Saint Paul University—are fine, world-class institutions, yet for too many years were underfunded. The president of Algonquin College told me the other day that as a result of our government's investment, they've been able to hire, for the first time, 35 new staff members to teach those young people the skills they need.

As we've said before, we're proud of our government's track record when it comes to job creation. We have seen over 220,000 net new jobs created in this province, not by the province of Ontario, because people are tired and fed up with politicians who take credit for things that they don't really have any control over. We've helped to create the environment to create those jobs, but it's been the private sector, the entrepreneurs in our communities.

Let me just go back to tourism for a moment, because I think it's important that we all work together to ensure that some of the issues facing our tourism industry are dealt with in a systematic and sensible fashion—working with the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership, working with the Canadian Tourism Commission. I congratulate people like Otto Herberlein and Dick Brown and Jacques Burrell and Cyril Leeder, tourism leaders in our community. I commend Cyril Leeder, who I know my friend from Leeds–Grenville knows, the CEO of Scotiabank Place, who was just honoured by the Ottawa Tourism Association as the tourism person of the year.

I had the pleasure of being out in Calgary two weeks ago helping Toronto and Ottawa bid for the World Junior Hockey Championship, which is going to be an amazing event, if one of our Ontario cities is successful in attracting that wonderful tournament in 2009. The provincial government was out there because we realize that these kinds of investments are important to attract the kind of tourists in the Christmas period of 2009 who will help fill hotel rooms, restaurants, help the taxi industry and so on.

In my own portfolio, at the Ministry of Health Promotion, I'm very proud of our reinvestment of \$5 million in the communities in action fund. I believe every member is aware of the communities in action fund. It's a program that provides small grants for start-up organizations or individuals who want to get their populations moving and involved in physical activity and recreation. Our good friend Scott Bradford is the executive director of the Boys and Girls Club in Ottawa, which has benefited from this particular fund; the YM/YWCA—I look forward to speaking at their annual general next week in Ottawa.

Our Quest for Gold program, which was a very, very positive addition to the amateur sports community in our province, was a lottery that was established by our ministry in conjunction with the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., and close to 1,300 young people from across the province have benefited from direct contributions.

## 2030

I was in Kingston with Minister Gerretsen on the weekend and met four of the athletes who received money from the Quest for Gold program. These individuals came up to me with their families at this reception at the YMCA and thanked the government of Ontario, because one of the young people could not have gone to the national championships in Vancouver if it wasn't for this money. Another was not going to be able to buy new speed skating equipment to compete next year in the competitions. So the Quest for Gold program put almost \$3 million directly into athlete support, as well as coaching, and an opportunity to enhance the summer games that are taking place in August in Ottawa and the winter games that took place in Collingwood just a few months ago.

Finally, I'm pleased that there are additional dollars in our budget for Smoke-Free Ontario, which is something I'm very, very proud of, the legislation that comes into effect on May 31 that will ban smoking in all public enclosed workspaces.

The member from Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford was complaining about tobacco taxes. I have to remind the member that his party increased tobacco taxes much more than we ever have, but we have committed to bringing the tobacco tax to the national average based on 2003, and we're proceeding with that. We've raised the tobacco tax three times, I believe, and it will be increased again to meet that national average, because the medical community tells us that the single largest factor in encouraging young people not to smoke is price. If we can work to get more and more young people not to smoke in the first place or to encourage them to quit, we're going to do that, because it's the right thing for the health care system in this province.

Fully 16,000 people will die prematurely this year in the province of Ontario as a result of smoking-related diseases. That's 44 people a day. That's just too many people. The grief that causes families and loved ones is too much. And there's the cost to the health care system. Often people say, "Governments are hypocritical, because you're getting all this tax money." In fact, we will only generate about \$1.5 billion in tax revenue from tobacco but we will spend over \$1.9 billion treating people with smoking-related diseases, and that doesn't even take into account the \$2.1 billion or \$2.2 billion in lost productivity. My parliamentary assistant, Dr. Qaadri, knows full well the implications of our not doing something about the tobacco epidemic we face in this province. We have to get fewer people to smoke. We have to get those people who are smoking and give them the necessary tools to get them to quit.

I am also pleased with the insulin pump decision. This is going to save families thousands of dollars. I've received a number of very kind letters and e-mails from residents in my riding of Ottawa–West Nepean from families who have had to pay for the insulin pump and the supplies that go with it. This government—thanks to Mike Gravelle who pushed this as a private member—is

going to be providing those services for those young people and, most importantly, for those patients and their families. It's regrettable that members of the opposition voted against that, because I think that is something that crosses party lines and something we should all be very, very proud of.

I am pleased to be a part of a government that has not ignored eastern Ontario, that has invested record amounts of money in health care. In the last year there literally has not been a hospital in Ottawa proper that has not had a crane up as a result of a construction project or a crane that has just come down. For instance, at the Queensway Carleton Hospital it will be going up because we have approved the third phase of the Queensway Carleton's expansion.

I thank the people of the Queensway Carleton, people like Mary Pitt, the chair of the Queensway Carleton Hospital Foundation, a former mayor of Nepean, who works tirelessly to ensure that funds are raised for that hospital and, more importantly, that awareness is raised. I look forward to going to the annual Queensway Carleton Hospital comedy auction that takes place at the sports-plex next week. As a result of activities that the hospital engages in, that money goes directly into patient care and very important services

I'm proud of the nurses and the physicians that I had the opportunity to stand by when the Premier announced the doubling of the cancer care centre in Ontario. This will have a dramatically positive impact on cutting wait times that are still too long for cancer care throughout eastern Ontario. That announcement was important because we were able to put almost half the centre at the Queensway Carleton Hospital. They're going to build a new facility and increase the number of radiation bunkers and chemotherapy beds for patients. That's good news for the people of the west end of the city.

I am also pleased that we are able to get community health centre status working with Pincrest-Queensway Community Health Centre and the Nepean Community Resource Centre, which serves Osgoode and Rideau townships. That is going to be coming online this year with the money in this year's budget.

I am proud of our investments in health care and education and infrastructure. I thank the House for the time I have had to speak about this.

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):**

The Minister of Health Promotion finally did get around to talking about tobacco. He actually talked about another act, Smoke-Free Ontario, but he didn't talk about this particular piece of legislation. If he would take a look at schedule O, the Tobacco Tax Act amendment, with respect to tobacco it makes reference to the manufacture, distribution, export/import, storage, sale and advertisement of tobacco. With respect to the manufacture of tobacco—this may be out of his ballpark, though manufacturing is part of this bill—Six Nations in Caledonia are in the business now, thanks to this government, of manufacturing cigarettes. Three billion

cigarettes a year come out of Six Nations; they don't pay any Ontario taxes on three billion cigarettes. That is an awful lot of dollars thanks to the McGuinty government. Those tobacco dollars help finance the occupation at Six Nations in Caledonia, again thanks to the McGuinty government. That kind of tobacco money helps finance the lawlessness we're seeing at the occupation site at Six Nations in Caledonia. That kind of money also helps finance the blocking of railroads that was mentioned earlier this evening.

Also, under schedule O of this Budget Measures Act, the section on distribution: Who distributes tobacco within the underground economy? Guess who showed up at Six Nations Caledonia the other day? The Hell's Angels. Thanks to the McGuinty government, we have a series of smoke shops operated by organized crime; we have a connection, obviously, with the Hell's Angels, again thanks to the McGuinty government. As far as export/import, government policy now encourages the import of tobacco rather than using Ontario farmer home-grown product.

**Ms. Horwath:** I am pleased to make a few comments on the speeches by the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell and the Minister of Health Promotion. It is important that they, as government members, try to dig through the budget and uncover the things they are actually proud of; that's their job. But in the digging through those pieces and coming up with pride around investments in children particularly—I think the minister spoke about his happiness with the commitments for education funding—I have to tell you, that's not what we're hearing from stakeholders. We're still seeing school boards struggling significantly under a broken funding formula that this government refuses to fix. It was a funding formula that the Conservatives put in when they were in place, a funding formula that didn't work and that led to all kinds of crises at the school board level. Notwithstanding the pride that the minister takes in the government's funding of education, he has to realize that education funding is still at a crisis point. Instead of being able to provide the services that school boards want to provide for young people, they're having to siphon dollars away from special education and from ESL and from French immersion, and they're still in crisis with transportation funding. All of these things are problematic. Those things are being siphoned away in order for school boards to be able to just make ends meet in terms of their rising staffing and capital costs.

It's a problem. Notwithstanding that they are proud of it, it's still a problem, and they're still doing what the Conservatives before them did.

Also, they must know that students at the next level up, the level after that, at college and university, are still concerned about the rising tuition fees. Again, this is something the government has not dealt with adequately.

I could go on, but I've run out of time.

**2040**

**Mr. Milloy:** I want to begin by congratulating my two colleagues, the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell and the Minister of Health Promotion, for their sum-

maries of the budget, some of the positive aspects and how they're affecting their ridings, and in the case of the Minister of Health Promotion, what he's doing in his portfolio. I want to congratulate him on his appointment to this new portfolio, an innovative and creative way to tackle the health care challenges that lay ahead, not only for this province, but I think it's going to serve as a model for the rest of the country.

The speeches tonight touched on the three key themes of this government: education, health care and investing in our communities, especially in the areas of infrastructure, research and development, and the list goes on. I think it's important that we all realize how much progress has been made in the last few years and how things have changed.

I'll just tell a very brief story to members. A few weeks ago, I visited an educational program in my riding for troubled kids in high school. These are kids who aren't able to make it through the system, and they go into this program for a year. Their success rate is astronomical. They return to the system, and many of them go on to post-secondary education, apprenticeships etc. During the course of that visit, I was shown a news clip from not that many years ago, when this program was on the edge of being shut down under the previous government. Why? Because of a lack of funds for education. Contrast that with our coming in: \$424 million in terms of education going in.

I only have a few seconds left, but I have to take issue with some of the ridiculous charges that have come across the way from the official opposition about what went on in 2003. Let me quote Premier Eves:

—"No, we will not be running a deficit this year": September 22, 2003.

—"We will balance this year": CKVR, on September 30, 2003.

—"There won't be a deficit this year," he said during the leaders' debate.

Mr. Speaker, it's really quite—

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you very much. There's time for one last question and comment.

**Mr. Runciman:** I won't spend a lot of time on that, but it has worked well for the Liberals in terms of the deficit they claim they were left. They don't talk about the fact that they had six months of that fiscal year in which to balance the budget. Premier Eves was right: We would have balanced the budget. We would have made the difficult decisions. What they did was spend it up; that's what happened.

I want to talk a bit about the Minister of Health Promotion and some of his comments about the passport and border issues. I represent a community with two border crossings into the United States, and this is a significant issue for us. You talk about the relationship with the United States. It's passing strange, with a new government in office—I think they were there two weeks, and we had this Liberal government in Ontario criticizing them, attacking them in this Legislature after they'd been in office two weeks. I don't recall any

references to the former government with respect to some of the attacks they made on the US government, the current government of the United States, whether in terms of the individual jumping on a George Bush doll, federal politicians demeaning the Americans—a whole range of issues—or Prime Minister Martin going after the president on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions when Canada's record is disgraceful in comparison with the United States.

This past fall I had dinner with a group from Connecticut. One of the things they said to me was, "Why do Canadians hate us?" This was an American group, very good people, asking why Canadians hate them. That's a perception because of the former federal Liberal government. Now we have provincial Liberals here with the gall to stand up and attack Mr. Harper and the United States government for trying to put in these kinds of protections for their own country. It boggles the mind that the Liberals have the gall that they display on a regular basis in this place.

**The Acting Speaker:** One of the government members has two minutes to reply.

**Mr. Lalonde:** I was just listening to the last speaker, the member from Leeds–Grenville. Let me tell you, we have to be honest with all the people of this province when we say that Mr. Harper has kept his word till now. I remember that about a year ago he said that if he was elected, he would cut the taxes on gasoline, but lately he said he just can't do that anymore.

Another point is that we have to remember that the former government left us with a deficit of \$6.5 billion. We had to adjust ourselves to that. We looked after the people of this province. We didn't download services such as 4,800 kilometres of road. We didn't download ambulance services. We didn't download social housing. We didn't download the farm taxes, of which the municipalities now have to absorb 75% of the total amount. Those are points that the former government has done to the taxpayers of the province of Ontario.

At the present time, the people of this province are really proud of the McGuinty government's 2006 budget. They recognize that with what they did in the past, the money we transferred to the municipalities to fix the roads and bridges was really welcomed by all the municipalities of this province. It was about time, because right now we are just repairing the—les pots cassés, as we say in French. That's what the people from the previous government had done.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke):** It's a pleasure to join debate on Bill 81. Before I get too far—

**Mr. Delaney:** Where were you last Sunday? We needed you on the ice.

**Mr. Yakabuski:** I was working hard in my riding. I was playing right wing there, as opposed to left wing for you guys down here at Queen's Park.

Interestingly enough, the new member for Nepean–Carleton had her maiden speech last week; she must have had a tremendous effect on the members on the

opposite side of this House, because the member for Perth–Middlesex pretty much spent the his entire speech today responding to the member from Nepean–Carleton. I congratulate the new member from Nepean–Carleton for having that kind of effect on this government the moment she steps into this House. Congratulations.

Speaking of the member for Nepean–Carleton, she was elected to this House on March 30, along with Christine Elliott, also a PC, and Peter Tabuns for the NDP. In Nepean–Carleton, right after that McGuinty budget, you got—what?—58% of the vote or something like that? So I don't know why the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell was talking about how the people are so proud of this budget, because in Nepean–Carleton, they said no to the McGuinty Liberals in a most resounding fashion, as they did in Whitby–Ajax and Toronto–Danforth.

Now that we have that out of the way, the Minister for Health Promotion talked about a visit to Pembroke. I actually appreciate that he mentioned my riding, so I want to talk a little about my riding.

**Hockeyville:** Is there anything in the tourism budget—because we are talking budget—to support the bid of Barry's Bay for Hockeyville? All throughout my riding, the entire valley, they are getting behind Barry's Bay like you just wouldn't believe. I had a chat the other day with Jack Wilson, the reeve of Laurentian Valley. Incidentally, Jack celebrated his 71st birthday and his 50th wedding anniversary on the same day last Friday. Congratulations to Jack.

**Hon. Mr. Watson:** Send him a CD.

**Mr. Yakabuski:** He's already offered to buy several because he knows just how popular it's going to be.

Anyway, Jack was talking about how much they support the Hockeyville bid. Do you know what's coming up? There's a new video coming out on May 16, I think it is, another step, and then of course on June 11 we're going to choose the winners of Hockeyville. I'm not sure if you're going to get another opportunity, but I suggest that all of the people in this House get behind the winning bid. Back a winner, Barry's Bay, for Hockeyville. It's going to be wonderful.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Yakabuski:** Well, Peterborough—a valiant effort, I might say to the member for Peterborough.

**Mr. Leal:** We're still in the competition.

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**Mr. Yakabuski:** Well, you're in the game because they've got to have so many in the game; I'm sorry. We'll talk about it after June 11, but the best of luck anyway. I still think you've got a fine city there.

Anyway, let's talk about this budget. Oh, boy. I heard the member for Kitchener Centre again talking about the deficit that they were left with. Well, it is becoming a little less fuzzy as time goes on just what the true circumstances were when this government took office. I don't think that at any other time in history, a government faced the kinds of absolutely unprecedented, unusual events that the previous government did in 2003 with

regard to disasters of epic proportions in this province like they had never seen before. But I can assure you, had that government been re-elected, they would have put their shoulders to the wheel and they would have balanced that budget before the end of the fiscal year. However, this new government knew that they could parlay that for their own political purposes. They no more wanted to balance that budget than they wanted to—I can't even say in this House what they wanted to do.

**Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce):** Oh, go ahead.

**Mr. Yakabuski:** I would only have to withdraw it, and that just wastes time.

They had no intention of balancing that budget and no desire to balance that budget, because they have used that number as a scapegoat for all of their failings—not all of their failings, because, my God, you'd need more than one scapegoat for all of their failings since they have taken office. But it is clear as we have moved forward that they could have balanced the budget of 2005 and they most certainly could have and should have balanced this budget. They are running a deficit for partisan political purposes, and that is a tragedy in our democracy.

This government talks about having a tough time. They're awash in cash, but they just don't know how to handle it. They're like a bunch of drunken sailors, and I'm not picking on the sailors; I would never pick on the sailors. But they don't want to balance the budget because they want to continue to use that crutch for political purposes.

What could they have done? They certainly could have supported rural Ontario a lot more in this budget.

**Mrs. Mitchell:** We did.

**Mr. Yakabuski:** Oh, the member for Huron–Bruce says they did. That's not what people in her riding are telling me. No, no, no. Rural Ontario got the shaft in this budget from this government. This budget was what I call the “buy Toronto” budget; that is b-u-y Toronto.

**Hon. Mr. Watson:** You can spell.

**Mr. Yakabuski:** Yes. I can spell “conservation” too; I must tell the minister that some day.

It's the “buy Toronto” budget, because that's what this was all about. Of all the excess spending of the \$3-billion windfall—windfall—almost all of it went to Toronto.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Yakabuski:** I have corrected my own record there, member for Perth–Middlesex.

They spent most of that money in Toronto. Rural Ontario got very little—some one-time funding.

**Interjection:** Will you give it back?

**Mr. Yakabuski:** We appreciate the one-time funding. No, we're not going to send it back; it is much needed. But it represents only a small amount of what is required for rural Ontario municipalities to support the programs that they're entrusted with today.

One of the things I'd like to talk about that they could have been doing—how come I only have three minutes left, by the way? Table, was this a 10-minute rotation? Yes? I thought it was 20. My apologies. Well, I'm not even going to be able to cover it all now. They deceived

me with that clock. All of a sudden, I've got half the time here. I want to know if the minister had anything to do with that.

Anyway, I want to talk about water and sewage support. I will thank the minister responsible for rural affairs for the fact that we secured a significant contribution for COMRIF in Renfrew, and that's great because that is much needed. But for small rural municipalities in this province with municipal water systems with few users, their government must find a better way of supporting them. The premise that they must support themselves and that it must be on a cost-recovery basis has to be revisited. Small rural systems in my riding, and I suspect in every one of the rural ridings out here—I don't hear the Liberal rural ridings complaining about this government much because they want to support the government, but they're putting all of their seats in jeopardy, I might add.

However, let's get back to the issue of small rural municipal systems. They have to be supported to a better degree than simply the COMRIF program. Those systems cannot be operated on a cost-recovery basis. They are too small, with too few users. It is provincial governments that mandate the improvements to those systems, that mandate the standards they must adhere to, and it has to be recognized by provincial and federal governments that there has to be more support for those small rural systems. I'm here to support the ones in my riding that are facing significant costs in order to upgrade and that need some extra help.

A couple of things—and I just don't have time. But the minister talked about borders and this and that. Well, this is the government that cut \$100 million from tourism in this budget and \$284 million from agriculture.

**Mrs. Mitchell:** That's not true, and you know it.

**Mr. Yakabuski:** Don't be pointing—I'm pointing the fingers here today.

Let's talk about long-term care. I recently met with administrators of long-term-care facilities in my riding and, boy, they are so, so disappointed in this government. The health minister said we're going to have a revolution in long-term care. You're going to have a revolution on your hands from long-term-care homes and administrators in this province if you don't own up to your promises and support them the way you promised in the campaign of 2003. You've broken almost every other promise. Please take a look at what you're doing to people in long-term-care homes in this province. Mr. Speaker, they have broken their word. They are not funding them to the tune they promised, and it is hurting and costing standards of living in our long-term care. They instituted all kinds of new standards—could I get another 10 minutes, Mr. Speaker?

**The Acting Speaker:** Not unless the House gives it to you.

**Interjections:** No.

**The Acting Speaker:** I heard a no. Questions and comments?

**Ms. Horwath:** I have to say they were very entertaining remarks by the member because he at first started talking about hockey, I think, in his speech. I have to say I grew up in a hockey family. My brothers both played hockey; they still, to this day, play hockey. So it was kind of reminiscent of the old days, hearing about the hockey issues.

But the member did go on then to speak about some really serious concerns about this bill and about the budget priorities of the government. Although we may not particularly agree on every single one, I think one of the things that's really apparent and that most members have been raising is the fact that budgets are about government choices. This member, I think appropriately, stood up for the members of his community, indicating that some of the choices that this government made were not necessarily the right ones from the perspective of the people he represents, and I think that's an important issue that needs to be brought here. I think he actually referred to a particular group of people who tend to sail the high seas in terms of the way that they spend money. I don't know if I agree with that characterization or not, but I do have to say that in some of the places where this government, while running for election, promised to spend money, we simply haven't seen it.

The member spoke particularly about the issues that seniors are disappointed with, the lack of commitments being fulfilled in this budget and in every budget so far to long-term-care centres in regard to hours of nursing, as well as the annual expenditure for each resident in those facilities. He spoke about the \$3-billion windfall this government saw and their lack of commitment to the long-term-care sector in terms of fulfilling their promises prior to the election.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to comment on the member's speech.

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**Mrs. Mitchell:** I just want to start off with the reference that the member made towards—"drunken sailors" was his actual comment. I want to say that I do take exception to that, as my husband was a sailor. I can tell you that that industry works very hard for Ontario and for all of Canada, and I do take some insult to the comment. Let's go on from there. I'll try to hold that back.

One thing I do want to talk about is how important this budget was to rural Ontario and for the riding of Huron-Bruce. I'm just going to give you a few numbers, just so that we can absorb those numbers. Over a million dollars in financing annually to ambulances to start to deal with the downloading that was done by this side of the House. Then we move on to the \$10 million that I received for roads and bridges. This is another thing that was so important to my riding. Just to state for the record, that member across the way also received \$7 million for his riding. So when we talk about abandonment of rural communities, I think one should bring all the numbers forward when one makes comments of it.

I also want to state that the ag budget was not cut; it was an increase of \$16 million. We have committed to the agricultural community. I know that the members from across the way continue to perpetuate that there was in fact a cut, when they know, by referring to the budget, that that is not true. There is \$350,000 to libraries in the riding of Huron–Bruce. It is tremendous. I talk about over \$5 million for the annual budget for my hospitals. I can go on and on, but I have run out of time. I do want to restate: This budget was about rural Ontario as well.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean–Carleton):** I certainly appreciate the honourable member from Huron–Bruce. She was almost as entertaining as the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. I thought it was a great exchange. I enjoyed it.

I want to congratulate the member for talking so much about eastern Ontario. I really appreciated it. There are a number of members here from eastern Ontario today. Regrettably, the budget didn't address our region as much as it did perhaps the greater Toronto area, the GTA. I'm wondering in his closing remarks if he wouldn't mind addressing this issue, that eastern Ontario was largely forgotten in the recent budget in terms of infrastructure funding.

I'd like to take exception to the discussion about rural Ontario receiving a lot from this budget, because whether you were in northern Ontario or anywhere else in rural Ontario, we can't get past the fact that \$244 million was cut from the agriculture budget. It doesn't matter which way you slice it, that money is not there, and our farmers are very frustrated.

Another thing is, young families in Ontario are upset that they're being taxed by about \$2,000 more annually, and it's very hard, like my family and many members opposite with young children, to make ends meet. As an advocate for young families in my community, I would have liked to have seen more money in the budget for children and youth. It's regrettable that this budget has taken out \$82 million for children and youth.

Again, I'd like to talk to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and see how he would address these concerns and what his recommendations would be to the Liberal government today.

**Hon. Mr. Watson:** I always enjoy the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. He's a cross between Cheryl Gallant and Hec Cloutier. He's got that great Ottawa Valley twang going and is really quite enjoyable to listen to. I don't believe half of what he says, but it's always quite entertaining.

My friend here from Mississauga has given me a couple of statistics, which we'll call a reality check, for the last year of the Conservative government. We know that they left us with a \$5.5-billion deficit. They would have added another \$4.4 billion in corporate income tax giveaways, then another \$300 million for the private school tax credit, bringing it up to \$10.2 billion, then another \$2 billion in other reckless spending. They would have left this province, if they'd stayed in government, a \$12-billion deficit, ladies and gentlemen.

Let me just quote one section from the Ministry of Finance, August 12, 2003, because the member talked in great detail about the difficult extenuating circumstances of that time. It says, "Ontario will incur an additional \$1,073 million in directly related costs in 2003-04 due to SARS. In the absence of any federal financial support, the province will offset these higher expenditures by allocating \$600 million of the \$1 billion reserve and reducing the contingency fund by \$400 million to maintain the balanced budget." Notwithstanding the SARS epidemic, notwithstanding the hydro blackout, the provincial government said, and it is right here in this document put out by Janet Ecker, "The 2003-04 fiscal outlook is on track with the 2003 budget plan. As of June 30, 2003, a balanced budget is projected, unchanged from the budget plan."

It was smoke and mirrors. They had no intention of balancing the budget. We do.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has two minutes to reply.

**Mr. Yakabuski:** I'd like to thank the members from Hamilton East, Huron–Bruce, Nepean–Carleton and Ottawa West–Nepean for their commentary.

I think the member for Nepean–Carleton put it right: People are continuing to suffer under this government, and this budget is no different. They're paying \$2,000 more per family than they used to, with the taxes and the fee increases under this government. And what's going to happen going forward, with the amazingly high energy price increases this government is causing because of their disjointed and unreasonable energy policy in this province? That's over and above the tax increases. What can we expect in the future under this government? Because they have no plan other than to look for expensive power in the province of Ontario and pay whatever anybody is willing to charge for it. The member for Perth–Middlesex talked about smog. Well, you don't even hear your Premier talk about smog anymore because he knows it was a bogus argument, because we can take care of smog with scrubbers and SCRs. He doesn't even talk about it anymore.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Yakabuski:** Well, I'll tell you, it's a heck of a lot cheaper than what you people are doing. That's reflected in the prices of power. The Minister of Energy was talking the other day about power prices going up 32% in Massachusetts. You know why they're going up 32% in Massachusetts? Because 70% of their power comes from natural gas and oil. That's why. Let's get the truth out here about power. The people are going to find that this government is going to dip into their pockets even more and more because of their disjointed, unreasonable, unsustainable policies.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Ms. Horwath:** It is my pleasure to enter into the debate on Bill 81, the budget implementation bill. I have to say that a lot of the debate tonight has been about choices, about whether or not the government has made the appropriate choices. Of course government members

get up and say, “Yes, we’ve made the appropriate choices. We’re proud of the choices we made,” and opposition members get up and say, “No, they made all the wrong choices. They should have done this; they should have done that.” Well, surprise. I don’t think I’m going to stray very far—

**The Acting Speaker:** I’ve a hard time hearing the member for Hamilton East.

Did I hear a point of order request?

**Mr. Runciman:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Under standing order 25, “Following the speech of each member, up to four members may ask questions and comment for up to two minutes each on matters relevant to the matters before the House...”

I believe, Mr. Speaker, there were three members who spoke in terms of the two-minute responses. That’s why I stood in my place and felt that it was appropriate that I would have an opportunity to have a two-minute response.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Runciman:** Were there four?

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**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you for your intervention. I stand to be corrected—we’ll have to check—but it’s my understanding and my recollection in my notes that the members for Hamilton East, Huron–Bruce, Nepean–Carleton and the Minister for Health Promotion—that makes four—had responded to the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

**Mr. Runciman:** My apologies.

**The Acting Speaker:** We’ll check the Hansard to make absolutely sure, but that’s my recollection and my understanding.

I appreciate your intervention, but I’ll return now to the member for Hamilton East.

**Ms. Horwath:** Speaker, do I get my time back on the clock?

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** We’ll look after that, thank you very much.

The member for Hamilton East.

**Ms. Horwath:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, it’s a matter of choices. I was also saying that I wasn’t going to stray far from the pro forma that has been occurring this evening in terms of highlighting some of the choices where I think the government erred in terms of the choices it made and didn’t make. A great deal of what I have to say is going to be similar to what the member from Nickel Belt said earlier, because we think that the government actually had the opportunity to make some of the appropriate choices. In fact, we understand that they made promises around some of the choices they should have made in this budget. Unfortunately, the choices they did make didn’t see the light of day in regards to looking anything like the promises that they made.

I thought it would be instructive to share with people watching tonight something called the Ontario alternative budget, a document that’s put out annually by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. Again, these are

the choices that governments make when they put together budgets, and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives put together an alternative budget, a budget with different choices in it. Their press release introducing their Ontario alternative budget for 2006, interestingly labelled *We Can’t Afford Poverty*, said:

“The alternative budget shines a spotlight on the McGuinty government’s abject failure to address the financial crises for Ontario’s least advantaged citizens left behind by the previous government.

“The government talks a good game about its success in rebuilding Ontario’s public services, but the reality is that, after you allow for inflation, Ontario’s lowest-income citizens will be receiving less support from their provincial government when the latest announced increases take effect than they were when the McGuinty government took office,” OAB co-chair Hugh Mackenzie says.

“Even the Liberals’ most basic promise to low-income families—to end the clawback of the federal child benefit for families receiving social assistance benefits—has evaporated. Despite the pass-through of the increases in the child benefit, the clawback they campaigned against is still taking millions of dollars in federal child benefit money out of the pockets of Ontario’s lowest-income families. Indeed, for every \$1 that the Liberals are passing through, the government is still clawing back more than \$5....”

One more important paragraph that I wanted to share that’s quoted in here:

“Taking concrete steps to alleviate poverty and income inequality isn’t just the right thing to do in a society that prides itself on its compassion, it is in the enlightened self-interest of every person in the province,” says OAB co-chair Andrea Calver. “Growing poverty places more pressure on the health care, education and justice systems. It makes our society less productive and it undermines the quality of life of the province as a whole. To put it most simply, we cannot afford poverty.”

I tend to agree with not only the sentiment but I also agree with many of the suggestions that the alternative budget brings forward, not the least of which of course is the issue of child care spending. But before I get to that, I think it’s important to acknowledge that when you are looking at the alleviation of poverty and looking at turning back some of these very regressive social policies that the previous government put in place, it takes dollars, it takes financing.

There are two important things I think people need to know within that context. One is, the \$3-billion windfall that this government got this last year and could have invested in removing some of these heinous policies, like the clawback that they campaigned against in the first place, and also the fact that instead of deciding to deal with some of these social problems or some of these income inequities or some of these deepening situations of poverty in our province, the government decided that they were going to reduce their revenues by expediting a capital tax giveaway. What that in effect does over time



is reduce the revenues of government by \$1.2 billion in this capital tax giveaway, a capital tax giveaway from which the organizations that are most going to be benefiting are banks and insurance companies.

People have said to me, "You can't muck with taxes because these companies will just leave." Well, I'm sorry, but the banks are not going to leave and the insurance companies are not going to leave; they're making money hand over fist in the province of Ontario. They're here to stay. So why are we giving them more money when in fact this money can be invested in some of the social programs that that government across the way said they were going to deal with?

I am not going to go on and on about the national child benefit; that's the first and most obvious one. That's the one that would have pulled a lot of these families that are struggling so hard out of poverty, or at least reduced the depth of their poverty. It's unconscionable, but the government has broken that promise yet again.

When you talk about families and you talk about governments and you talk about policies and you talk about the government taking a leadership role, the McGuinty government likes to brag about the number of citizens of Canada that it represents when he talks to the federal government about things like fiscal deficits, budgetary deficits, or the gap, if you will.

Why isn't, then, this government taking on a leadership role when it comes to things like child care? I cannot fathom it. This government made real commitments around the implementation of a child care program in Ontario. They went over the top in their announcements of the Best Start program, and frankly I thought that was the right direction to go. In fact, the alternative budget document that I was speaking about before agrees. They can't understand either why this government has turned its back on child care. What they say in their document on child care is that the Best Start program would have been the most appropriate thing for the government to do. They don't even say that the government should have kept their \$300-million promise. In fact, they're saying an infusion of \$520 million in new provincial dollars was the appropriate way to go.

What they are saying is that the Liberal government has failed the families of Ontario, that the issues that were identified in terms of early learning and care for children in this province have not gone away, that instead of turning back the hands of time and wholeheartedly abandoning all of the research and all of the information and all of the investment that not only the government and staff in this place, but agencies and organizations and physicians and early childhood educators and people in the field—all of the effort that has gone into building this elusive Best Start plan was a good investment and shouldn't be abandoned. Instead, this government has taken a hightail exit on their commitments to child care. What kind of leadership is this province showing when other provinces in this country are already far ahead of the province of Ontario in terms of provincial investment in child care programs and in terms of providing a child

care program that is accessible and is licensed appropriately and is universal and is developmental, that has all of the elements that this government could have continued to work towards?

Instead, they took the cheap way out and they cut the child care budget by 22%. I say that is not the way to lead on children's issues in the province of Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Leal:** I did listen to the comments from the member for Hamilton East, but, Mr. Speaker, I would like to note—you would know this—that back in 1993, it was the government of Premier Bob Rae that froze ODSP in the province of Ontario. It's interesting to note that five of their eight-member caucus who are here today were cabinet ministers in that government, so they would have rubber-stamped that decision back in 1993—rubber-stamped it.

I carry with me every day a little article from the Toronto Star dated December 5, 2005: "Layton Softens Stand on Clinics."

"The admission takes the wind out of a key issue for the NDP in the campaign," because Jack Layton says that public clinics are here to stay. Oh, my goodness: private clinics. He softens his stand.

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**Hon. Mr. Watson:** And he went to a private clinic.

**Mr. Leal:** That's right; my friend Mr. Watson tells me he did go to a private clinic, the Shouldice clinic. I know my constituents in Peterborough couldn't go to a private clinic like that. We depend on the investments in public health care, such as the \$200-million investment made for a brand new hospital in the riding of Peterborough, new investments for primary care reform in Peterborough, because we believe in strengthening the public health care system in the province of Ontario.

Last Saturday, I had the opportunity to attend a district meeting of the Canadian Diabetes Association. They were appalled—appalled—that the opposition parties would vote against the initiative of providing insulin pumps and supplies for families across the province of Ontario. They told me they should be ashamed of themselves for not voting for that initiative, and they—

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

**Mr. Barrett:** I actually didn't get quite the violent reaction to the presentation by the member from Hamilton East that the member opposite just presented. I think of the city of Hamilton. Having knocked on many, many doors in the member's home riding during the by-election—I think we were up there for maybe seven days, all told, and to her credit, in spite of our best efforts, the member from Hamilton East prevailed. But I was so impressed with the houses and the yards and the gardens—and not just flower gardens, but some of the vegetable gardens that people have in the city of Hamilton. It suggests to me—when you think of the city of Hamilton, it's a hard-working town; I have a lot of respect for that city. I drive through that city quite a bit.

People arrived in Hamilton from Europe over the generations as a result of the ravages of war, food shortages. Budgets in Europe consistently, as in the United States, provide an allocation of very significant dollars to guarantee food self-sufficiency. Europe went through it; the United States knows about it. Presently, in the province of Ontario, we see reductions in the agricultural budget that can be fixed in the course of this year with extraordinary allocations. But again, I think of the city of Hamilton. In spite of the beautiful gardens in the small properties that I visited—the potential is there to grow food, but I think we all recognize that the city of Hamilton cannot be self-sufficient in food, even if everyone had a garden. I will propose that you are dependent on farmers, not only in this province but elsewhere, and that kind of dependency should be reflected in an Ontario budget.

**Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex):** I am pleased to have time for a couple of comments on the speech by the member from Hamilton East. She brought up a subject that I'm keenly interested in, not as a parent but as a grandparent, and that is child care.

We had a deal with the federal government. In fact, the deal was across this country with the federal government. Then we get the new Reform-Conservative government in Ottawa under Stephen Harper, and he says, "Oh, I've got a better deal for you." He said, "I'm going to give each family \$1,200 for each child under five." Now, isn't that a great thing?

You know, in the city of Toronto, our daughter can't get decent child care for our little grandson, Adam, to begin with, and do you think you could get it for 1,200 bucks a year of taxable benefit? You couldn't do it. So what does this new government in Ottawa do? It just rips it up; it just tore it apart. And we've got these kids, these young people—

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Crozier:** I think you're selling our Best Start program a little short, because we are doing our best, but could we use the federal government's help? Absolutely. But they just tore it up. Nancy, our daughter, wrote to the Prime Minister; he hasn't answered. She wrote to Jack Layton and Bill Graham too to get support. But 1,200 bucks a year for child care in the city of Toronto, let alone in Leamington or Essex county—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Crozier:** Hey, now, don't you talk. I don't have a child under five, but I have two grandchildren who are under five, and I know that they need decent child care and I know they aren't going to get it from your federal government.

**Mr. Yakabuski:** It's a pleasure to respond to the member from Hamilton East. Yes, I must say, since she was elected in the by-election in 2004, she's made a great contribution here on behalf of her party and her constituency, and she speaks passionately on the issues.

One of the issues she's speaking about today is child care; she speaks on child care and health care. When I look at health care, I ask the people of this province to

judge this government as to whether or not they were square with them and whether they were honest with them. They railed against the previous government. They said, "We will never, never build a hospital that isn't 100% publicly owned, publicly funded with public money. We will never do anything like build a P3 hospital."

We can't criticize them for doing it, because that was our plan, so that the money for bricks and mortar wouldn't be taken out of the public purse. But that is exactly what they are doing. They are building the hospitals like from our plan, because they weren't honest enough to be square with the people of this province and tell them what they were going to do. We, on the other hand, are always willing to tell the people of Ontario what we will do. We won't hoodwink you. We won't try to pull the wool over your eyes. We will be square and we will be straight. When we bring a policy and when we bring an election platform to you in 2007—I say this to the people in TV land—you will be able to take that to the bank. We won't make promises that we can't keep. We will not say things—

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Take your seat. Sorry. I apologize. Would the House come to order, please. We're almost done.

**Mr. Yakabuski:** Could I have a few more seconds to wind up, Mr. Speaker?

**The Acting Speaker:** I'll allow you to conclude your brief two-minute response. I recognize the member for—

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** I'd ask the House to come to order, please. Let him conclude.

**Mr. Yakabuski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

You would like to speak to this House in the softest of tones, and they force you to raise your voice simply because they don't like what you are saying. But the fact is that we disagree with this government; we disagree with the budget. We would like to articulate that—

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you. This concludes the time for questions and comments.

I'll return to the member for Hamilton East. Do you wish to respond?

**Ms. Horwath:** I will be really quick with my response. I want to thank the member from Peterborough, although he spoke about issues that I didn't speak about, and he spoke about a caucus I wasn't a part of. Nonetheless, I think he thought it was important to raise some of those issues. But he's still, I think, not admitting that there are some problems with the budget.

To the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, thank you for talking about my community of Hamilton. One of the things he didn't acknowledge, though, is that in fact Hamilton has a huge agricultural community, and a great deal of our economy is reliant upon our agricultural community. I think that is an important thing to mention.

To the member from Essex, again, thank you very much for your comments. I think it's extremely important

that you raise them. Certainly, everybody would agree that the federal government—at least I agree—has gone the wrong way. The Jack Layton child care budget was an important piece of Canada, and unfortunately the government that we have now has not seen the right thing to do. My family members are paying over \$1,400 a month—my brother for his two children, my niece, Erica, and my nephew, Andrew. It's a sin that they have to pay that much for child care without any help.

To the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, thank you very much for your comments as well. Although you talked about hospitals and P3s, one of the

things I thought was interesting was how you indicated that this government, unfortunately, is going in the same direction as your government went in terms of private financing of hospitals. We in the NDP, on the other hand, don't believe in that.

Thank you to all members for your contributions. I appreciate it.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you very much. It being past 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

*The House adjourned at 2130.*

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