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Wednesday 21 June 2006

Mercredi 21 juin 2006

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 21 June 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 21 juin 2006

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INTERIM SUPPLY

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I move that the Minister of Finance be authorized to pay the salaries of civil servants and other necessary payments pending the voting of supply for the period commencing July 1, 2006, and ending on December 31, 2006, such payments to be charged to the proper appropriation of the 2006-07 fiscal year following the voting of supply.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Earlier today, the member from Niagara Centre asked a question with respect to the Ministry of the Environment releasing an expert panel report on the sludge issue. I'd like to record that as a point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Well, it's not a point of order, but I guess it is on the record.

Mr. Sorbara.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: As those of my colleagues who are gathered in this House know, the interim supply motion is the authority that we all give to the government in order to pay the bills. As the motion points out, the interim supply allows us to continue to pay the bills between July 1 and the end of the year.

There's a tradition here that the debate on supply can really visit any of the matters that the government is dealing with. After all, we're providing the authorization to do everything from, I guess, issuing new licence plates to things like the funding of the—

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): The bus rapid transit.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: I knew that we needed to mention your municipality: the new bus rapid transit system in the great city of Mississauga, represented so aptly by my neighbour here tonight, the member from Mississauga West.

I thought, in the few minutes I have to speak on this motion, I might simply say a word or two about the thousands and thousands of men and women who, every day, come to this place and hundreds of government offices around the province, the 65,000 or so civil servants for whom tonight we are authorizing the revenues that will find their way into their pay envelopes.

I recall that when the first throne speech of this administration was read in this Legislature, that throne speech paid a special tribute to the public servants of this province. In fact, I recall on election night, October 2, 2003, that the Premier-elect, Dalton McGuinty, had a clear and powerful message to Ontario's public servants. He said, and I'm going to paraphrase, that the importance of their work was essential to the mandate that he had just received from the people of Ontario. That mandate was very clear: to improve public services, particularly in key areas like public education and public health care.

1850

Since the time we were sworn in on October 23, I myself, in the roles that I've occupied, have come to appreciate in a really special way the hard work Ontario public servants do. It's an almost 24/7 kind of situation. Members of this House know that when we come down to this Legislature, sometimes as early as 6:30 or 7 o'clock in the morning, to prepare for a particularly busy day, Ontario's public servants are already here, making sure that the business of government is ready to be attended to.

I want to say a word of commendation to the head of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, Leah Casselman. I know Leah quite well, from before the election and since that time. She is—

Mr. Delaney: Passionately committed to her members.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: My friend from Mississauga West says it best: "Passionately committed to her members." I recall, it wasn't so very long ago, that negotiations between the government and OPSEU, led on behalf of the government by my friend the Minister of Government Services, resulted in an historic collective agreement between OPSEU and the government for four years in duration.

I also want to mention some of the successes we've achieved in innovation with the clear and forceful co-operation of Ontario's public service. I recall, for example, the pride with which we announced the fact we were providing, for the first time in Ontario's history, a service guarantee when it came to the issuance of birth certificates. Members of the previous Parliament will know what a mess it was to get a birth certificate during the previous administration. It was chaotic. The number of complaints that came into constituency offices outshot just about any other issue. My friend the Minister of Government Services said, "We need to do a better job here." I think it was the Premier who said, "We need to

go beyond that. We need a service guarantee because the people of Ontario deserve that.”

It was about a year ago that the service guarantee was finally put into place. My friend Mr. Phillips, the Minister of Government Services, said to me that out of 150,000 online applications for birth certificates, some 15 or 20 have taken advantage of the service guarantee and got a birth certificate without paying the fee. That means that 140,000-plus have received their birth certificates within the service guarantee period. I want to say tonight, as we consider and I hope pass supply, that that is a tribute to the men and women in the Ontario public service who understood the mandate and ensured that we would be able to deliver on that commitment.

So 65,000 employees, public servants in the government of Ontario, and let me just add to that an even larger constituency of people: the tens of thousands of nurses who work in hospitals and long-term-care facilities across this province, who serve the public with passion, dedication, inspiration and commitment. As we pass this supply motion, I think we should be remembering that we are providing the revenues to pay these public servants.

It was just the other day that the Premier said to a group of caucus members—we were all together—“If you get a minute, stop in at a hospital and say thank you to the doctors and nurses who are working there.” He said the same thing about taking an opportunity to stop in at a local police station and say thank you to the men and women who do that. This supply motion provides revenue to municipalities, and through them police officers who protect us in communities all over the province are provided with the revenue necessary to make those payments.

Finally, I want to say a word of thanks and recognize the over 100,000 men and women who teach in our public schools right across Ontario. Mr. Speaker, I don’t want to go on about the terrible problems that we inherited in the area of public education, but you, sir, because you went through the election, will remember that many descriptions of public education used the word “crisis” routinely. Fast-forward now, just two and a half years later, and people go into our schools and say that there’s a new atmosphere of inspiration, a new dedication to learning, a new commitment by teachers.

As we consider this supply motion, I want to pay tribute to former Minister of Education Gerard Kennedy, who was able to bring about the negotiation of historic four-year collective agreements with teachers’ unions across the province. That has added to the stability.

But our commitment to higher test scores, our commitment to smaller class sizes, our commitment to show our own dedication to the work that teachers do—and I’m looking at the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, a former teacher who understands the challenges of the classroom. In this supply bill we provide literally billions of dollars to school boards so that we can pay for the wonderful work that teachers do right across this province.

Finally, just to mention that crew of people who work to maintain the whole system and keep it going. When we walk into this building in the morning, it’s clean and neat. The lawns are cut on the outside. That’s replicated in government buildings. There are men and women who are restringing wires, who are making sure that the systems work. This supply bill authorizes us to make all those payments, and I think it is appropriate to say thank you to them for their public service and the work they do, and to say to them that we will continue in our dedication on a program of constant improvement of public services, and that work will be delivered by them.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): It’s a pleasure to add my comments. I must say, it is kind of nice to hear the member from Vaughan–King–Aurora, the once and now again Minister of Finance, speak in this House. We didn’t hear much from him for a few months; he was kind of in exile. It’s nice to see him back. I always do appreciate and enjoy listening to him address this House, I must say that.

Interjection.

Mr. Yakabuski: Okay, now let me talk, John. You go back to your seat.

I’ve got to get a couple of things out of the way before I really get into it because I did say to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities that I’d have something nice to say tonight. I must say that he has given me good indications about some of the strong feelings he has with regard to Algonquin College, Upper Ottawa Valley campus, in Pembroke, Ontario, and I am hopeful that he will continue to be supportive of the programs that they have there, because that is a vital, vital institution in my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. I do hope he will continue to support that.

Back to the matter at hand. One thing about interim supply motions is that we do have an opportunity to freewheel a little bit. And you know me: Generally, I am Mr. Deadeye, right on the subject. But sometimes you have a little room, a little latitude to go a little bit sideways. And you can’t be interrupted by the member from Mississauga West on a point of order on the interim supply motion because he thinks you’re off topic.

So what do I want to talk about first tonight? I have limited time, I’ve got to get right to it, so I want you to listen carefully. And you people out there, I want you to listen carefully too.

What is one of the great disasters of this government? We could list them, and probably I’d run out of fingers and toes and I’d have to go to my colleague John O’Toole and borrow some of his. However, one of the great disasters is their absolute and abject failure on the subject of energy policy in the province of Ontario.

Then-opposition leader Dalton McGuinty stood in front of the people, in fact in this chamber, in Hansard, and said unequivocally, “We will shut down every coal-fired power station in the province of Ontario by 2007, come hell or high water.” That’s what he said—in Hansard. That is what he promised.

1900

It has become apparent in the last few weeks that that promise was an absolute farce. I can't go too far here, you know. It was an absolute farce. They absolutely knew that they could not meet that promise, but they insisted on trying to continue to bamboozle—I think that's okay—the people into believing that they could actually accomplish that goal—a total failure; an absolute, abject, miserable failure.

Now where are they today? They've climbed down from that completely; however, they're still insisting that somehow they're going to get these things shut down. They still believe they're going to shut them down—no timetable any more, no promise. But, you see, they're still trying to spin it because they don't want to completely retreat on all of those terrible things they said about coal generation in Ontario, because now they're actually admitting that they're going to continue to produce power by means of burning coal in Ontario.

What have they done? Three lost years that could have been devoted to reducing emissions at those coal power plants by installing mitigating emission control systems that would reduce substantially, by 95% and 97%, the NO_x and the SO_x that those stations produce. Not a single nickel did they spend on it. The Premier said, "Why do I believe in shutting them down? When I saw smog days in Algonquin Park, that was it for me." Well, NO_x and SO_x are the primary components of smog. We could have been dealing with those three years ago. In fact, the previous government was dealing with them, installing SCRs on two burners at Nanticoke and scrubbers and SCRs on two burners at Lambton, which have made those two of the cleanest coal-burning burners in all of North America.

I guess the question that people will have to ask themselves is, did this government know that it couldn't do that, and if so, why did they insist on saying they could? Because that borders on something—you know what, Mr. Speaker—I can't say because you'll be rising up in that chair very quickly. That is something that the people are going to ask themselves: "Wow. You mean this government was telling us something that they knew they couldn't do? Governments aren't supposed to do that to the people. They're supposed to be honest with us at all times." So that's one possibility.

The other possibility is that they are so utterly incompetent that they just had no idea what was going on in the energy sector in Ontario, no idea what kinds of hurdles they would face in trying to implement those kinds of policies. Either way, I think the people have to ask, and then answer, that question: "If a government hasn't been fully forthcoming with us and totally honest, then it's time to throw them out; and if a government is incompetent, it's time to throw them out." So at the end of the day it leaves the people with little option than to come to the conclusion that it's time to throw them out. Not yet, because we can't have an election until October 4, 2007, but at that time I don't think the people are

going to forget how they have mismanaged this file with regards to energy in Ontario.

I don't have a lot of time. There are so many things I'd like to cover, but I do want to stick to the timelines that we've been governed by here.

Another issue that the people must be absolutely disappointed with is the total lack of leadership on the part of this government with regard to the impasse and the occupation at Caledonia. What is it, 116 or 117—I can't remember exactly how many days it is; near the end of February: Since that time, this situation has deteriorated continuously, and what do we get out of the Premier? We get out of the Premier, first of all, an undertaking that no negotiations will proceed unless certain conditions are met. Those conditions were not met, but back they go to the table.

Then we find out that they're taking your money—your money, ladies and gentlemen—and engaging in the negotiation of a settlement by buying the land that will still be in dispute; buying the land with your money. But you know what they're not telling you? They're not telling you how much of your money they are spending.

If you remember the throne speech that Dalton McGuinty proudly had the Lieutenant Governor read here in 2003, he talked about transparency and openness and honesty and integrity in government. I don't want you to ask me. You ask yourselves, ladies and gentlemen: Do you think what we're seeing today from this Premier is displaying that honesty and openness and transparency in government? You ask yourselves those questions; I think you'll come to the same conclusions that I have come.

I want you people on the other side of the House to ask those questions as well, because I believe there are an awful lot of good people. Everybody who comes to this House comes with the right intentions. Sometimes we get a little misguided because politics come into play and that is unfortunate. But I want you to talk to your Premier and I want you to talk to that minister and I want you to sit down with them and I want you to say, "We're doing the wrong thing. We're doing the wrong thing for the people of Caledonia; we're doing the wrong thing for Six Nations; we are doing the wrong thing for Ontario. It is time for us to stand up, show some leadership and do the right thing. You have until tomorrow to correct what you have been messing up for 116 days. Please, on behalf of the people of the province of Ontario, mend your ways and make it right."

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): It's certainly my pleasure to make a few comments on this matter before us this evening, which is interim supply. I think the finance minister described it as giving the authority to the government to pay its bills.

I have to say, obviously, interim supply is necessary and needs to be done, but I can tell you that there are some bills I wish this government saw fit to actually pay. In fact, there are a number of things this government should take under advisement and start paying some

attention to in the province of Ontario. I speak, of course, about children.

This government has been an abject failure in its response to the needs of children in the province—period, full stop. It is a disgraceful set of affairs when the government, a major part of their platform being a child care program for the province of Ontario—that at the first sign of the new federal government turning its back on the previous federal government's commitment, all of a sudden the Liberal provincial government decided that they no longer were committed to a child care plan in the province of Ontario. I have to say, it's a sorry, sorry state of affairs when one of the largest provinces in the country cannot find its way to provide a child care plan for the children of this province when it was one of their major platform planks.

I was shocked. I was shocked, not only that the government decided that Best Start was no longer going to be started; that the commitments that had been made to families from one end of this province to the other were so quickly reneged upon by the government; that they'd not only cut the commitment and said, "You know, the federal government is not going to be in on this anymore, so we're not going to be in on this anymore, either. We no longer—even though it was a major part of our platform—are committed." All the research, all the studies, all the gathering of evidence and information and a framework for the delivery of child care might not have been the way I would have done it, but certainly it was a step in the right direction. But oh no, this government decided that all that evidence, all that material and all that forward momentum needed to come to an immediate halt. Why? Because the federal government decided they weren't going to invest in a child care plan across Canada.

1910

The provincial government, on the other hand, had committed their own \$300-million investment in child care in their platform. What happened? When the feds reneged, all of a sudden the provincial government reneged. They didn't have to. They could have actually invested their \$300 million, kept the ball rolling in the right direction, not disappointed those thousands of families who were waiting with bated breath to get some affordable, licensed, quality, developmental child care for their children. Early learning and care: It's a very basic concept that has reams of evidence supporting it. The government supported it while they were running for government, while they were running in the last election. They built a whole platform around child care. They spent a lot of time and effort working on that issue until, lo and behold, the federal government changed and their commitment was no longer there, and that gave the McGuinty Liberals carte blanche to turn their backs completely on the families of Ontario. I say shame on them for doing so.

Interestingly enough, just in time for tonight's debate, I received an email from a woman who is active in child care issues in her community in the region of Waterloo. I

thought I should take this opportunity to read it because it's extremely instructive. The government would like to lay all the problems, the blame, for the lack of child care and their lack of ability to deliver on that promise at the feet of the federal government. But I've already indicated quite clearly that not only have they not put their \$300-million investment in, but believe it or not, this interim supply bill speaks to a budget that had a reduction in the children and youth services budget. They've reduced it by 22%. So not only did they not invest their \$300 million, but they've actually reduced the budget by 22% for child care in Ontario. I have to say shame on them.

But it's not just me saying shame on them. I'm quoting from this article that was in the Kitchener-Waterloo Record. It's an article written by someone named Brian Whitwham. This is dated June 21, 2006.

"Hundreds of children from low-income families might miss out on day care this year after regional councillors decided to send a strong message to Queen's Park yesterday.

"Councillors chose not to rescue the child care program by making up for shortfalls in federal and provincial funding. Several said they didn't like the move but felt it had to be made to force the provincial government to accept responsibility."

Even regional councillors are saying shame on the McGuinty Liberals for turning their backs on low-income families in the region of Waterloo.

"It breaks my heart but I'm going to support it," Councillor Claudette Millar said. "If this is what it takes to get the province to move I will support the motion—very angrily."

The councillors had to withdraw their support for child care because they're not getting the money this government promised them. Instead, they're seeing clawbacks and another broken promise of a \$300-million investment that never did materialize in the province of Ontario. I quote again:

"The community services committee decision, which will go to council next Wednesday, reduces the number of children eligible for subsidies to 2,300 from 2,600. Children's services director Mary Parker said that means the region will have to freeze the program until 300 children leave," to be able to make room for more children.

I could go on and continue with the details of this report, but I have a number of other issues, so if people are interested in reading it, it's published in the Kitchener-Waterloo Record. It's a condemnation of this government's lack of commitment to child care.

That's only one of the things this government has refused to acknowledge in terms of their responsibility for children. The other big broken promise that comes to mind immediately, when I think about children, is the refusal of this government to stop the clawback of the national child benefit, a very clear campaign promise made by the McGuinty Liberals that to this day, three-and-a-half years after that campaign, has still not been fulfilled. Shame on them. Some \$1,400 per family

annually that could be making a huge difference in the lives of children and in the lives of low-income families is simply being—they washed their hands of it. They say, “We are no longer committed to really making a difference for the kids who are experiencing the deepest levels of poverty in this province.” With one small stroke of the pen, this government could do the right thing by the children and the low-income families of this province that rely on social assistance. Instead of having that national child benefit clawed back, those families could be reducing—certainly not eliminating, I would say, because of the dismal levels of social assistance in this province that continue to keep families in poverty—the number of times they have to rely on food banks and the number of times those kids have to go to school hungry.

The Minister of Education is often up on her feet talking about all the wonderful changes in the education system. If you want to see some changes in how effective education is, send kids to school who are not hungry. Make sure they're fed. Make sure they have a decent, affordable roof over their heads. Start dealing with investment in things like affordable housing and decent standards of living for children and you'll see some big changes in the education system. I can guarantee you that.

I've touched on child care funding and on the issue of the national child benefit, but there are so many other pieces that this government refuses to acknowledge they have to take responsibility for.

Another big one is their lack of even acknowledging the fact that our children's aid societies need to have absolute, independent Ombudsman oversight. In fact, I just met with some people in my office this evening. I don't know why the government refuses to allow an independent, unbiased review of what's happening in children's aid societies. We have seen the horror stories time and time again. Certainly children's aid societies have a lot of responsibilities and a lot of work they need to do. They try their hardest, but there are systemic problems that continue to occur that are hurting children day after day in Ontario, and it's simply not acceptable. If we had Ombudsman oversight, we'd be able to get at some of those systemic issues, as well as provide a decent, unbiased and appropriate venue for complaints by people who have concerns with their local CAS and the problems they've experienced there.

I was recently informed that our local community care access centre in the city of Hamilton is reducing services once again. Children cannot get services, adults cannot get services from CCACs. I have to tell you, what does our CCAC in Hamilton say?

“Hamilton CCAC does currently have waiting lists for some services. The waiting lists were reluctantly implemented in November 2005 because the local need for service is greater than our ability to purchase it, based on what we receive in funding from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

“The waiting lists are a significant concern for the Hamilton CCAC and we are very sympathetic to the

frustration experienced by individuals and families. We have written to the regional office of the MOHLTC”—the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care—“and are in the process of setting up meetings with MPPs to apprise them of the situation.”

It's a damning indication of this government's lack of commitment to children and families in Ontario.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge): I'm pleased to enter into the debate on the interim supply motion. I'm pleased to follow the minister from the government side. He took the time to articulate what the motion is really about, and that's certainly about the need to do the business of government and what it means to the many thousands of employees of the province, as well as the broader public sector, and the appreciation we have.

I'm pleased to follow both the official opposition and the third party, because if they weren't opposing what we're doing, we would be in pretty rough shape. That's what this place is about—they're supposed to oppose. So I'm pleased they're still on track, even though it's the evening before we wrap up for a bit of a summer recess.

This may be one of my last opportunities—probably my last opportunity—to speak, unless we have a couple of minutes tomorrow.

Interjection.

Mr. Arthurs: No, Mr. O'Toole, I'm not doing that, not at all—but my last opportunity before we recess for a bit of a summer break.

I know, as we wind down at this point in time, many of us are rather looking forward to a little bit of a break, some time off, as well as some constituency work over the next couple of months. It's been a long stretch. I know all of the members and the staff—the minister commented on the legislative staff, the OPS staff and the broader public sector. I want to comment on the political staff on all sides of the House, those who work in our political offices and our constituency offices. For most of us—I know in my case—they're the unsung heroes, being the direct interface with my constituents and with those who want to reach into the office of government if they're not a constituent. They work very hard for us. They put in long hours every day. They take those calls when we're not there in the constituency office and deal with those constituents who have real needs. In some cases, those needs are stressful for the individual and stressful for the staff. I think it's an appropriate opportunity, since supply allows us a range of opportunity to speak, to celebrate the work done by our political and constituency staff.

1920

The minister spoke about the initiative of the Minister of Government Services to provide a money-back guarantee on birth certificates. My daughter is drafting a letter of thank-you to the minister, which I encouraged her to do. My youngest and newest granddaughter—my chance to get family on the record in Hansard—Leá, who was born on December 17 of last year, got her birth certificate within the required time and met the time

frame for guaranteed delivery. Certainly my daughter's happy with that and, as Leá gets to be a little bit older and understands what a birth certificate is about, she'll be happy that she has it as well.

The minister made reference to the broader public service. He mentioned nurses, doctors and the like, and commented on teachers and the fine work they do for us. My second opportunity tonight to put family on the record: my wife, Susan, is retiring from the career of teaching after some 30-odd years in about seven or eight days. She's very much looking forward to her retirement as she reaches towards the end of this month. Each day she is in at the school office at 7 in the morning and most often not home until 5 or 5:30 at night, and rarely has time for anything that we'd call lunch. I know, on a day-to-day basis, how hard our teachers and other public servants work.

I've had the opportunity in the past almost three years to work with public servants here directly in a couple of ministries, both with Minister Phillips in the former Management Board Secretariat, now Ministry of Government Services, and subsequent to that with the ministers of finance. So I've had a chance to interact very directly with the very fine public servants we have in the province of Ontario, particularly here at Queen's Park, those who provide policy advice and those who manage the affairs once government decides on a policy direction, who set that policy in motion and ensure that the dollars of the taxpayers of Ontario are being not only well spent but well managed.

Initially there was some level of frustration with: Why do things take so long? Why are things so cumbersome? Why can't we just make that decision and move right along with it? I found out, after spending some time here, that part of the reason is because of the due diligence that the Ontario public service does on behalf of government, on behalf of the Legislative Assembly, to ensure that the policies that are being implemented are being implemented in the direction the government is providing but also being implemented in the context of other legislation or regulations that they have to take into account, as well as to ensure that the public dollar is being protected. Those checks and balances along the way are there to ensure that those taxpayers' dollars are being accounted for, each step of the way. Although the public and even elected officials may find that somewhat cumbersome, it's good to know that that oversight, those checks and balances, are there.

We probably shouldn't forget those folks like the officers of this assembly, like the Auditor General, whom we dealt with here in the Legislature today to extend that term because he's doing a fine job in his office. The function of officers of this assembly is to ensure that the entire assembly's efforts are being respected, to make sure their work is being done; not just the government's work, but the work that this assembly does, and to make sure there is an accounting back to this assembly, to make sure there are methods and strategies so that we

know what's going on in government and debate can occur here around matters affecting government.

The interim supply motion is part of that. It's ensuring not only that we're able to continue during this year to implement the policies of government as reflected in the budget, and as reflected in the estimates process, where all parties have a chance to challenge various ministries on their budget provisions, ask challenging questions along the way and demand answers of ministers and ministries to ensure that the process, as the member from Peterborough says, is not only transparent but accountable to us all.

Those staff who provide those services—the Auditor General or the Integrity Commissioner, or the Ombudsman, who was mentioned in the last speech, or the Environmental Commissioner—any of those folks who are appointed to do work on behalf of this assembly and the people of Ontario deserve our thanks as well. We may not agree with everything they have to say and do, but it's not their job to make sure that we agree with them; it's their job to make sure they put forward the types of—are we okay? I'm watching. I can see the clock ticking down, so I know I'm down to about two minutes. I'll wrap it up at that point because I know that as we move towards—

Interjection.

Mr. Arthurs: We'll see in 16 months.

Interjection: What's your policy on energy? Are you going to unveil it soon?

Mr. Arthurs: We have a good energy program. I'm looking forward to the environmental assessment processes that will come with things like considerations of refurbished nuclear, and whether it's Darlington or Pickering. I know that Bruce is ongoing. I'm anxious to see OPG move forward on the EA for Pickering B and its renewal. It'll take some time to do that. We're going to need that energy supply.

I know that my friend from the Durham riding, part of the great region of Durham which we jointly represent, will look forward down the way to what might be happening in his neck of the woods, in Darlington. We'll both be looking very closely at how the process proceeds and the consideration of new nuclear, as will the member from Huron-Bruce, across the floor from me, in her home riding.

We're going to be watching closely what happens on that front, as well as other initiatives on the energy file, which is an important file, one which the government recognizes as important and why the Premier said that we're going to take that file up, that we're not going to wait until after an election and try to ride things through and then address it maybe down the road somewhere. He said that we're going to address this right up front because it's an important file and we're not going to shirk away from our responsibility moving into an election year.

I see the clock's ticking down to the last 10 seconds or so. I just want to say that this is an important motion. It allows government to do its business. It's an opportunity

to celebrate the good work of the folks of the province of Ontario, the OPS, the broader public sector and others. I wish everyone a good summer season and a good holiday.

Mr. O'Toole: It's difficult to follow my good friend and peer the member from Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge, Wayne Arthurs. Quite frankly, I'm surprised he's on the government side and not in cabinet. It has nothing to do with the interim supply motion, but I know him to be a former mayor of Pickering and a capable person who realizes that Durham basically has been ignored. It's tragic to say that because it's really not part of my main remarks, but I listened with some interest and I would say that.

The interim supply motion gives members liberty to take some account of what's actually happened or is happening in their riding, and it's under that kind of definition that it's ultimately to legitimize the payroll, which I would endorse, so I will be supporting the interim supply motion. That being said, I want to go on to say that the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, with some passion, I might add, has spoken—without being regarded—on the energy file with considerable experience. He knows of what he speaks, and he's been ignored by the Minister of Energy. They're not being as free with disclosure with the people of Ontario on the price for energy going forward with their lack of a plan.

I don't want to digress. There are a couple of things I want to say. First and, more importantly, on a personal level, I want to wish all members of all parties, regardless of our differences during the year, a happy summer—because it's getting close to the season and we have a different job here—and a safe summer. We disagree, but we all try to serve our constituents as well as the other people of Ontario.

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There are things that I think the Minister of Transportation—on some of the issues that I brought forward. The transit tax credit: I'm crushed, quite frankly, that they haven't endorsed that. It's such a practical thing to do to encourage people to get out of their cars. Wayne and I know: We commute from Durham. The Sergeant at Arms is from my riding and I'll probably see him on Canada Day at the museum; I do every year. My point is this: Sometimes good policy is simply good politics. I mean, it oversimplifies our duties here.

The other part is, as the Premier said earlier this year, he's seized with the issue. I'm seized with the concern that he fails to recognize the importance of dealing with the cellphone issue, the driver distraction issue. It may not seem relevant to the debate tonight, but I get calls from all over Ontario about the inability of the—Donna Cansfield is the minister.

Mr. Yakabuski: John, it's for you.

Mr. O'Toole: I have a call here. Actually, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing—

Interjection.

Mr. O'Toole: Wayne, the Sergeant at Arms, from the riding of Durham, sees that confiscated. There's what

should be done in cars. Thank you very much for that, Wayne. I would dispose of that phone immediately.

I spoke today on the issue of distracted driving. Distracted driving this summer could be in anything from a sailboat to a power boat, to an automobile, to a scooter. Obviously we have to respect each other, and we respect the water courses, the sidewalks and the roadways. Impaired driving, drugs while driving: Any of those things are prohibited. We should avoid them. I encourage the OPP to help us maintain safe highways during this summer because it is a tragic time, where families—and boating, Bill 209, David Zimmer's bill. I would be on the record publicly here as supportive of that as the critic, and most of our caucus supports that. We would encourage Jim Bradley to bring that forward as we wrap up this session tomorrow.

Most caucuses, Mr. Zimmer, support that. I want to support the members who have written—all members of all caucuses. As the critic for transportation, I'm on the record right here, right now, supporting that bill.

I realize the dynamics of what gets supported, whether it's the organ donor thing or all these things. Rick Bartolucci is a minister; he's a part of cabinet. That is a good policy, and good policy is good politics. We've got to get around the issue of disagreeing just because it gives one member some traction over another. I don't think it's even ideology, at the end of the day; I think all of us are here in a very genuine way, outside of all the partisan stuff, to serve the people of Ontario. I don't say this just because it's the end of the session. It's in the theme of the interim supply motion, which is that we're paying the public service, including us, however meagre that might be, for doing a professional job to the best of our ability. In my experience, having worked for General Motors for 30-some years—10 or so years in personnel and 10 in salary administration—there's a way of determining, encouraging and rewarding performance and they've got to start to do that here somehow. Certainly good civil servants are absolutely paramount for us to have, as I try to link my discussion around good policy.

I'm going to turn my focus, for a moment, on a personal level. My family is very important, as most of you would probably know. And for most of you, family is important in your lives. But I said earlier today in response to a question that my wife, Peggy, is retiring at the end of this June as a teacher. She's spent some years teaching for the Peterborough Victoria Northumberland board of education. She's quite a modest person. She's a primary ed teacher. I was surprised, and I mean this. I don't know how to state it, actually. She's very capable, very competent. She raised five children. I was the assistant, not the primary provider. I was surprised that she spoke in response to OEETA, that had an appreciation ceremony. She did get up and recognized—but what she said at the end was so genuine, that what she will miss the most is her contact with children.

Surprise, surprise: Last Saturday our oldest daughter, Rebecca, who is married to an Australian, came home.

They arrived last Saturday from Australia with our two grandchildren. They're here for, I believe, five weeks, and my wife, a primary ed teacher, is actually babysitting tonight. I spoke to her just before the session this evening. Our daughter and her husband are in Toronto enjoying some free time. It's very important to relate your own life experience to the people we tend to serve. It's in this vein that I want to say that I welcome David and Rebecca, as well as Megan and Daniel, our grandchildren, and I also extend that to say that on Canada Day in the riding, all of us as members will have a very important day. In my case there will be the 150th, the sesquicentennial, celebration of Newcastle—very important. I made a statement on it earlier this week. Not only that: The museum traditionally in Clarington has a flag-raising on Canada Day, and Wilmot Creek will have an event as well.

More importantly, my grandchild from Australia will have his second birthday on Canada Day. My wife, Peggy, was in Australia when he was born. She was actually in the delivery room—quite amazing. I'd like to put this on the record because it is part of history. What we're doing is history. It may be micro-history but it's history. She was actually in Australia. She left the day after school was dismissed. She went there because our daughter was having our grandchild. She was in the delivery room and the child was born. Daniel was born two years ago on Canada Day, in Australia. She had pins, Canadian flags and all that stuff to celebrate this thing, and the anaesthetist was actually a Canadian. My wife was videotaping it and they sang O Canada in Australia when Daniel was born. So it's a great and very important birthday that I'm sharing with you. I don't want to invoke tears in anyone or anything, but it's important to do that. I wanted to put it on the record because to me it's part of Daniel's history, part of our history and part of the history we all celebrate here tonight, sometimes in a rather confrontational manner.

I would just say that in my riding of Durham, or the riding that each of us serves, we are always proud to represent the interests of not just our families but of our constituents.

I'm now being encouraged to wrap up these comments. I wish everyone a great summer. I have a lot more to say and a lot more notes but I've been encouraged to conclude.

With that, I'll submit that our side would be supporting the interim supply motion.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): It's a pleasure for me to participate in the debate tonight. Following on the theme that was set by my colleague from Hamilton East, I want to talk about children, and autistic children in particular. I remind the members who are here and people who are watching that in light of the promises made by Mr. McGuinty in the last election, and in light of the \$3-billion windfall this government experienced in the most recent budget, this government has absolutely failed autistic children in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I was at a rally in Kingston on Monday morning at 11 o'clock. It was one in a series of rallies, one like you and I participated in in Windsor a couple of weeks ago. I want to, on the public record, congratulate Cindy DeCarlo, Susan and Dan Fentie, and Laura and Bruce McIntosh, all parents who have children with autism and who have been instrumental in creating a number of rallies across the province to remind the public, and the media in particular, about the promises Dalton McGuinty made in the last election to families with autism, and to tell this government in the clearest way possible, "No more excuses. Do what you promised for families who have children with autism." I was there in support of these families and I will be at other rallies with them. The next one I will be at will be on July 31 in Kitchener-Waterloo, and Ottawa, and one in Sudbury in the fall. I'm there to support those parents because I agree that we shouldn't have any more excuses from this government. This government should do what it promised in the last election.

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I want to focus this evening on the three promises that have been made by this government to these families. The first has to do with a promise that was made in the middle of the election, September 17, 2003. This was a letter that was written by Dalton McGuinty, then leader of the Liberal Party, to Nancy Morrison, who at that time had a five-year-old son, Sean, who had autism. He has a twin who has autism as well, although hers is not as severe. Nancy wrote and asked what the position of the Liberal Party was with respect to the former government's policy of cutting off children at the age of six from the government-funded IBI treatment program. This is what Mr. McGuinty had to say to Nancy Morrison:

"I also believe that the lack of government-funded IBI treatment for autistic children over six is unfair and discriminatory. The Ontario Liberals support extending autism treatment beyond the age of six."

Yet, when the government was elected, the discrimination continued right on. Those children who were on the government-funded IBI program on the day they turned six got a letter in the mail saying, "Thank you very much, but your treatment is over, and it doesn't matter if you need more IBI or not, your treatment is done." So the very same discrimination that the Liberals were so critical of before the election is a discrimination that they continued once they got those votes and once they were elected.

It's worth pointing out that the only reason today that children over the age of six continue to get IBI treatment if they had been in the program before they turned six is as a result of a court decision by Justice Kiteley in April 2005—not because the McGuinty government decided to do the right thing, but because of a court decision that was made by Justice Kiteley on behalf of 29 families who have autistic children, who have fought the former government and then this government in court to try and get the justice their children deserve. Justice Kiteley, in her decision last April, said that the Liberal government

was violating—violating—the charter rights of Ontario's autistic children because this government discriminates both on the basis of their age and on the basis of their disability. Because it was a charter case, this government has been forced to continue to provide IBI treatment to those children who were on the program until such time as that court decision is overturned.

You would have expected that this government would have accepted that court decision, because it was exactly what Premier McGuinty promised before the election, to end the discrimination, but oh no. Within about 36 hours of that decision being rendered, this government announced that it was going to appeal that decision to the court of appeal in Ontario. And that's what the government did this last December—went into court again, fought those parents one more time, abused taxpayers' money by fighting against these parents and tried to deny them the justice that they are so entitled to.

The worst part is that we all expected the decision to be rendered in June from the court of appeal and we have all been hoping that it would be positive. In the last three weeks, the government has now been before the court of appeal, or is trying to get a hearing before the court of appeal, to introduce fresh evidence to try and ensure that the court of appeal rules against these families. In the last three weeks, the government has been before the court trying to introduce fresh evidence in order to try and make sure that these kids don't get what they deserve, indeed that these kids don't get what this Liberal government promised them before the last election. Shame on a government that would spend so much taxpayers' dollars fighting families in court, fighting families who are trying to get what this government promised them before the last election when it was looking for their votes.

Let me deal with the second promise that was made in the same letter to Nancy Morrison. It had to do with IBI in the school system. The letter says the following:

“We are not at all confident that the Harris-Eves Conservatives care to devise any innovative solution for autistic children over six—especially those with best outcome possibilities that might potentially be helped within the school system with specially trained EAs.

“In government, my team and I will work with clinical directors, parents, teachers and school boards to devise a ... way in which autistic children in our province can get the support and treatment they need. That includes children over the age of six.”

So the government promised that it was going to have IBI in the schools so autistic children could continue to learn in Ontario's school system. What did Justice Kiteley find, because after the election, of course, the government didn't put IBI therapists into the schools; the government didn't tell the school boards that that's something they had to do, even though they promised it. What did Justice Kiteley say about the Minister of Education in this regard?

“[T]he Minister of Education failed to fulfill the statutory duty to ‘ensure that appropriate special edu-

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

What a condemnation of the former Minister of Education and this government with respect to its total failure to make sure that children who have autism get the supports and programs they need in our school system, in order that they can learn. That is the same pathetic situation that exists in the province of Ontario today. Shame on a government that would promise this before the election to try and get votes of families, and after that just throw it right out the window, right out the door, as if they had never made the promise in the first place.

I want to deal, finally, with funding for IBI services, because the government, when it came into government, announced that it was going to put oh, so much more money into IBI. The reality is that the government has announced a lot of money for IBI, and the government has turned around and diverted that funding to other programs.

Fiscal year 2003-04, the last six months of which the Liberals were in government: The government promised \$80 million to be spent on autism services; \$36.6 million of that was returned to the consolidated revenue fund at a time when there were children who qualified for IBI who were sitting on a waiting list and who could have used the services and that money to get them those services.

In 2004-05—the Liberals are in government the whole time now—the government budgeted \$89 million for autism. In that same fiscal year, the government diverted \$21 million to other children's programs within the ministry, at a time when there were 399 children on a waiting list hoping for service.

The Minister of Children and Youth Services last Friday announced \$8 million; that's supposed to provide services to 120 kids. I sure hope that's going to happen, but the track record of the Liberals so far is that they announce money for IBI and then divert it somewhere else. At the same time, the waiting list for children who qualify for IBI has continued to grow and grow.

I want to put these numbers on the record. March 31, 2003: There were 76 children who qualified for IBI and were waiting for service. March 31, 2004: 89 children who had qualified and were on a wait list for services. March 21, 2005: 399 children who had qualified for IBI and were on a wait list for service. March 31, 2006: 753 children who qualified for IBI service who are languishing on a waiting list, waiting for service when

this government had a \$3-billion windfall in March of 2006 and could have easily—so easily—provided the funding to get those kids off the waiting list.

My time is running out, but I want to conclude by saying this: It is a disgrace in the province that a political party would go out at an election and make promises to some of the most vulnerable children and vulnerable families in the province of Ontario. That's what this government did when it went out and promised it was going to end the discrimination against autistic children over the age of six and ensure IBI was going to be provided in the schools.

The reality is that after the election, the Liberals did the same thing that the Conservatives had done before them: continue to discriminate against these children and continue to deny IBI therapists in the school system. Worse still, the government continued the court case that had been underway under the Conservatives, and have fought—fought these parents harder than ever before, even harder than under the Conservatives—to deny them the services and the treatment they need.

Finally, we've got an Attorney General who has brought in a bill—Bill 107—to change the situation at the Human Rights Commission and the Human Rights Tribunal. One of the fallouts of that bill, if it is passed in its current form, will mean that the current tribunal hearing that is going on with respect to autistic children—over 100 families who are alleging discrimination on the basis of their children's disability—if the bill goes forward as it's written, that whole case will be lost. Those families have been before the tribunal for three years now trying to get justice. The delay hasn't been on the part of the tribunal; the delay has been this government, which kept passing motions and bringing forward motions so

that: first, the case couldn't be heard until a federal case on autism was heard; second, the case couldn't be heard until Justice Kiteley had rendered her decision; third, that the Human Rights Tribunal had no authority to hear the case—and on and on. The delay has been absolutely at the hands of the Liberal government. If that bill passes as it is currently printed, then that case will be lost entirely.

I oppose the bill for all of the reasons that have been outlined by my critic, Mr. Kormos, but I particularly oppose the bill because of what it's going to do to those families who have waited so long for justice. I say to the government, as I conclude, you had the money, you made the promise. No more excuses. Do what you promised for those families whose vote you wanted before the last election.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? Does any other member wish to speak?

Mr. Sorbara has moved government notice of motion number 183. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Carried.

Orders of the day.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Bartolucci has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House is adjourned until 10 of the clock Thursday morning, June 22.

The House adjourned at 1952.

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Simcoe–Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
St. Catharines	Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L) Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, government House leader / ministre du Tourisme, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées, leader parlementaire du gouvernement		

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

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

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Estimates / Budgets des dépenses

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Garfield Dunlop
Wayne Arthurs, Bob Delaney,
Garfield Dunlop, Andrea Horwath,
Cameron Jackson, Phil McNeely
John Wilkinson, Jim Wilson, David Zimmer
Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Finance and economic affairs /
Finances et affaires économiques**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Phil McNeely
Ted Arnott, Wayne Arthurs, Toby Barrett,
Pat Hoy, Judy Marsales,
Phil McNeely, Carol Mitchell,
Michael Prue, Liz Sandals
Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

General government / Affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Présidente: Linda Jeffrey
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Jim Brownell
Jim Brownell, Brad Duguid, Kevin Daniel Flynn,
Linda Jeffrey, Jean-Marc Lalonde,
Jerry J. Ouellette, Peter Tabuns,
Lou Rinaldi, John Yakabuski
Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Government agencies / Organismes gouvernementaux

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Gilles Bisson, Michael Gravelle, Tim Hudak,
John Milloy, Ernie Parsons,
Laurie Scott, Monique M. Smith,
Joseph N. Tascona, John Wilkinson
Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

Justice Policy / Justice

Chair / Président: Vic Dhillon
Vice-Chair / Vice-Présidente: Maria Van Bommel
Bas Balkissoon, Lorenzo Berardinetti,
Vic Dhillon, Christine Elliott, Frank Klees,
Peter Kormos, Ted McMeekin,
David Oraziotti, Maria Van Bommel
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

Legislative Assembly / Assemblée législative

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Mario G. Racco
Bob Delaney, Ernie Hardeman, Rosario Marchese,
Ted McMeekin, Norm Miller, Jennifer F. Mossop,
Tim Peterson, Mario G. Racco, Mario Sergio
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Public accounts / Comptes publics

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Présidente: Julia Munro
Shelley Martel, Deborah Matthews,
Lisa MacLeod, Bill Mauro, John Milloy,
Julia Munro, Richard Patten,
Norman W. Sterling, David Zimmer
Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Regulations and private bills /
Règlements et projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Présidente: Andrea Horwath
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Tony C. Wong
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Dave Levac, Gerry Martiniuk, Bill Murdoch,
Khalil Ramal, Mario Sergio, Tony C. Wong
Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Social Policy / Politique sociale

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Khalil Ramal
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Kuldip Kular, Jeff Leal,
Rosario Marchese, John O'Toole,
Shafiq Qaadri, Khalil Ramal, Kathleen O.Wynne
Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Norm Miller
Wayne Arthurs, Caroline Di Cocco,
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Michael Prue, Monique M. Smith,
Norman W. Sterling, Kathleen O.Wynne
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

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