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(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 14 November 2006

Mardi 14 novembre 2006

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 14 November 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 14 novembre 2006

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House related to Bill 151, An Act to enact various 2006 budget measures and to enact, amend or repeal various Acts—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Someone has to call the order first.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: There's no quorum.

The Acting Speaker: Would the table ascertain if indeed there is a quorum in the House?

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much. I will once again recognize the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Speaker, I got a little bit ahead of myself, you're quite right: government notice of motion 237.

The Acting Speaker: I recognize once again the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 151, An Act to enact various 2006 Budget measures and to enact, amend or repeal various Acts, when Bill 151 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment, and at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs; and

That no deferral of the second reading vote shall be permitted; and

That the standing committee on finance and economic affairs meet on Thursday, November 23, 2006, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon and following routine proceedings for the

purpose of public hearings and clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 151; and

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the clerk of the committee shall be 12 noon on November 23, 2006. On that day, at not later than 5 p.m., those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. The committee shall be authorized to meet beyond the normal hour of adjournment until completion of clause-by-clause consideration. Any division required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 127(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House not later than Monday, November 27, 2006. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That, upon receiving the report of the standing committee on finance and economic affairs, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called on that same day; and

That, on the day the order for third reading for the bill is called, the time available for debate, up to 5:50 p.m. or 9:20 p.m., as the case may be, shall be apportioned equally among the recognized parties; and

That when the time allotted for debate has expired, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and put every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That the vote on third reading may be deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceeding on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to 10 minutes.

Speaker, I so move.

1850

The Acting Speaker: Mr. Caplan has moved government notice of motion number 237. Debate? I recognize the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Lots of generous time in that for committee.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I'm pleased to be able to speak to this particular motion, 237, standing in the name, of course, of my good friend the government House leader, who notes, at the outset, allowing for significant time by a legislative committee and by this House to be able to deal with important measures arising out of the 2006 budget.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: Do you remember how much time was given for committee for the social contract?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: My colleague the government House leader asks me how much time was given to the social contract by a previous government as it moved through this Legislature. In fact, I do know the answer to that: There was no time in committee. In fact, that's quite a bit of the difference in the way that the government House leader, Mr. Bradley, and members on this side of the House treat this Legislature with the kind of respect that it deserves, to allow the opportunity for members to be able to engage in debate, to allow members to meet in committee, to be able to go through clause-by-clause consideration of bills. I'm proud that this government has opened up this Legislative Assembly to much more full debate and discussion, unlike in the nine years that I've had the privilege to serve the people of Don Valley East in this chamber.

I want you to know, Speaker, that no member on this side of the House takes the use of time allocation in the section of the standing orders lightly. I want you to know that it is only sparingly used after eight years. I remember, when I sat on that side of the House, when I sat to your left-hand side, Speaker, for eight years I watched legislation being forced down the throats of the opposition, allowing no time for committees, allowing no third reading debate, allowing nothing whatsoever reflecting the kind of principles that are contained in this motion before the House today.

I would note—and I think you may hear a great deal from members opposite—that the changes in the standing orders, the rules governing this Legislative Assembly, were originally introduced in fact by the now third party. I know that the member from Niagara Centre was a fierce proponent of supporting those rules that were brought down by then-government House leader Shelley Martel, later passed by then-government House leader Dave Cooke. But, as sparingly as they've been used by our government—as I say, in eight years we saw the kind of change of atmosphere, the kind of utilization of these rules to stifle debate, to silence the opposition, to not allow the public to have an opportunity for time in committees with members of this assembly.

I want to share with you, Speaker, and all members of this assembly some key facts that I think need to be stated at the outset of this debate. As a government, we've introduced 102 government bills. Eighty-three of those bills have been passed; in only 14 has time allocation been a necessity. This government, the McGuinty government, has time-allocated fewer bills than any government since it was introduced in 1990, and considerably fewer than my colleagues in the official opposition,

the Tories, who time-allocated a whopping 102 bills. We've introduced 102 bills. Eighty-three bills have passed without it. The previous government time-allocated 102 bills. As a government, in total, we've time-allocated about 7%. I think all members would agree that that's a rather modest amount in order to make sure that key legislation like Bill 151 does reach legislative fruition, does become enacted.

I would contrast that with my colleagues, now in the official opposition, who time-allocated almost 50%, almost half, of the bills that they introduced: time-allocated, prevented debate, no committee hearings. That's quite a contrast. You might hear a little bit from the members opposite, moaning and crying, complaining and caterwauling, but I only ask you to compare the record. Compare what has happened previously to the current state. In fact, the Eves government in 2002 used time allocation on 75%, a full three quarters, of the bills they passed. In 2003 they allowed for no committee and no third reading debate whenever time allocation, this method, was used. Speaker, you would remember those days well. I know that you were on this side at that time, but you would remember those days well.

So let me be very clear: This government, on this side of the House, Premier McGuinty in a position of leadership, has told us and has set a tone of respect, respect for all members of this House, to allow as much opportunity for debate as possible. I want you to know that we're not going back to the NDP days or the Conservative days of just using these kinds of tools at will and at random, but only in very limited circumstances, only when it's necessary.

I certainly point to the contrasts between previous governments, the way the rules around this chamber and around this place were changed unilaterally by the New Democrats when they had the privilege of serving to your right hand, sir. I note that we use this measure sparingly because of the belief in full and as much opportunity for members to participate in debate and opportunities for the public to engage legislative committees. We, as a fundamental sign of our respect, use the rules as have been passed and introduced by previous governments, but we use them quite sparingly. I want to stress that the key is the respect that we show this Legislature, the respect that we show members of this Legislature and, ultimately, the respect that we show the citizens and the residents of Ontario whom we are here to represent.

I want to urge all members to support this motion, to support government notice of motion 237. I want to request that all members support Bill 151: progressive legislation; legislation that would modernize the Liquor Control Act and the LCBO; legislation that would introduce tax increment financing, an innovative tool to invest in infrastructure; legislation that is much needed; changes that are needed; investment that is needed, helping us to raise the quality of life in a province literally that is second to none.

Speaker, I thank you and I will listen intently to the debate as members choose to engage.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate on the motion?

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'm not pleased to participate in a time allocation motion because it indicates that the government is prepared to shut down debate on a substantive piece of legislation before the House, but so be it. We're dealing with a majority Liberal government—Liberal McGuinty government—that has chosen to ignore not only its commitments to the people of Ontario through its various campaign promises that Mr. McGuinty and his colleagues so arrogantly choose to ignore, but they fully expect that the electorate forgives them as well for not keeping their promises, and now we move on. It's interesting, at a time when the government has also introduced proposed legislation to deal with democratic reform, that at the same time and in the same session this government introduces time allocation that essentially says to members of the House, "We don't want to hear from you anymore. We're going to limit the amount of debate that you're going to have." And so I will use the time that I have to speak to the bill that is being time-allocated.

1900

I have but a few minutes, but I want to speak to it from the perspective of my responsibilities in this House as critic for education. In that regard, I want to get to the heart of what I believe is going to be a hallmark of this government, and that is that they have a great penchant for making public announcements that on the surface are most attractive and as a result are pronounced with great fanfare and attract a great deal of applause, but as time goes on, stakeholders, taxpayers, find out that that is what it is: It is simply the art of spin and it has nothing at all to do with integrity of governing.

Nowhere is that more profoundly seen than in education, and for a Premier who has taken on the self-proclaimed mantle of the education Premier, I find this most offensive. I want to point out to members, and particularly members of the government, who probably have not read this bill, because most members of the government rely on the crib notes that are given them by the ministers of the day to simply stand in their place and recount—

Interjection.

Mr. Klees: Well, the member from Essex, I would ask you to tell me, if you would, what schedule Z.8 stands for. What does it really mean to the taxpayers of Ontario? Mr. Crozier goes back to his BlackBerry rather than responding.

Let me, Speaker, tell Mr. Crozier what in fact this schedule, hidden in this document—hidden in the final slim pages of this document we have schedule Z.8, Teachers' Pension Act. Now, here's what is very interesting about this. We're talking about a financial document. We're talking about legislation that authorizes the government to do certain things relating to finances in this province. I want to read into the record this section of this legislation.

Under 1(1) it talks about, "Section 5 of the Teachers' Pension Act is amended by adding the following subsection," and it says in subsection (8):

"Despite subsection (1.1), the total amount of contributions payable in respect of 2008 by the Minister of Education and the employers who contribute under the pension plan may exceed the amount of contributions payable by or on behalf of active plan members in respect of credited service for that year."

That sounds innocent enough, doesn't it? The fact of the matter is that what this section of the legislation does is allow the government to make up the unfunded liability in the teachers' pension fund. You may say, "Well, that's fine. What does that mean?" Well, here's what it means: The unfunded liability in the teachers' pension fund, depending on how the calculations are done, ranges anywhere from \$21 billion to \$31 billion. That's \$21 billion to \$31 billion. And essentially what the government is doing is saying, "We're going to prepare ourselves here to take on the responsibility of making up that unfunded liability." What they're not telling you is how much that unfunded liability is going to be and what the impact is going to be to the taxpayer.

While we're talking about education, I want to point out to the public that while we have a government and a Premier here who continue to tell us that all is well in public education, that is not what is really happening here. I rose in the Legislature on May 5, 2005, and in a question to the Premier I made the following statement. I'm going to quote from Hansard. I spoke about the commitments that the government was making to the salaries of teachers in this province. I was not arguing at all about the level of the contracts and the level of pay; teachers are well worth what they are getting paid in this province. What I was challenging was whether, in fact, the government was prepared to fund the contracts that they had negotiated. At that point I said to the Premier, "Will you guarantee that the funding for teachers' salaries will not come out of other envelopes within the education budget?" Well, the Premier came back with his very direct response: "The member opposite is just really, really stretching on this one. It takes a lot of creativity to turn what is an absolutely wonderful news story for Ontario students into something negative." During that entire exchange on this very issue of underfunding those contracts that had been negotiated by the government, he insisted that that was not the case.

Well, here we are: Fast-forward to October 20, 2006. This is from the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation media release. I was at the press conference. Here is what the teachers' union said about the McGuinty government:

"The funding crisis facing Ontario's school boards has forced many to balance their budgets for 2006-07 by dipping into reserves and cutting programs, services, and front-line personnel. In a few boards, trustees have flatly refused to take these steps to balance their budgets, pointing to a flawed provincial funding formula that must be fixed..."

"A substantial portion of all new education funding has been earmarked for specific ministry initiatives and has not helped boards cover the funding shortfall for core

operating expenses. And even when the government did add \$600 million to the education budget last spring to bridge the funding gap for teacher salaries, it did so at the expense of the local priorities and learning opportunities grants.”

What I want to point out to people in this province is that they’re dealing here with a government that is better than any before at the art of the spin. They are excellent communicators when it comes to making press conferences and media releases and fresh announcements about the wonderful things they’re going to do for education. But what they have been doing is making new program announcements without providing the fundamental accountable planning and fiscal resourcing of those announcements. That’s why, contrary to what the Premier would have us believe and contrary to what the Minister of Education would have us believe, education is not in a good state in this province. Multi-billion dollars of shortfall exist in this province in the education file, and we are starting to see the results of that.

1910

I want to point out that while we continue to hear the rhetoric from the education minister that the funding formula needs fixing, we also continue to hear from the Minister of Education that they will eventually review that funding formula. Well, that funding formula was reviewed extensively by a third party by the name of Rozanski. This report was presented after extensive review—province-wide review—in response to the previous government, which understood very well that reform of the student-based funding formula was a work in progress, that it was not static and that changes and adjustments would have to be made to that funding formula based on the changes in demographics within our school system and to keep up with those circumstances.

This report, the Rozanski report, commissioned by the previous government, was accepted and adopted by the previous government. I might remind the government that the previous government made the commitment to implement fully the Rozanski report, which would have infused an additional \$1.8 billion into the foundation of the funding formula over a period of three years and would have adopted all the recommended changes that would have made up for many of the shortfalls that were in the original funding formula document. The review has been done, and I might also remind the government that while they were on the campaign trail, they promised to implement Rozanski, albeit on a shortfall of \$1.6 billion over four years. The previous government made the commitment to implement at \$1.8 billion over three years. Stakeholders in education today know that all this government would have to do is implement Rozanski, a comprehensive review of \$1.8 billion, make the fundamental changes, and our education funding would be in a very different state than it is today.

I submit that this government is being caught short. It understands; they know what has to be done. We’re going to hold their feet to the fire: Implement Rozanski,

get on with funding education, get on with reforming the basic funding formula for education in this province.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): First of all—

Mr. Kormos: Give ’em hell, Ms. DiNovo.

Ms. DiNovo: Oh, I’ll try. First of all, to motion 237, one notes the language. It’s pretty commanding and directive language for a democratic process: “That no deferral of the second reading vote shall be permitted”; “at not later than 5 p.m.”; “not later than Monday, November 27”; “necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment”; and finally, “That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to 10 minutes.” One wonders at the strength of language from a government that I recall debating Bill 28, a little nine-page bill which was really an amendment to the blood services act. It took them almost a year to get it through; it’s still in process. One has to wonder about the hurry that Bill 151 is accorded when other bills are left to languish—I can think of a number of examples of those.

But before I get to why they might want to ram this bill through without due process and due debate, let’s take a little fun walk down memory lane, shall we? I’d like to quote from Hansard, first of all, Mr. Caplan himself, the honourable member from whom we just heard. On November 21, 2001, Mr. Caplan said, “I usually start off my remarks by saying it’s a pleasure to speak to something on behalf of the people of Don Valley East, but it really isn’t. This is yet another closure motion, a gag order on the Legislature. How could it ever be a pleasure to speak to that, when that’s the normal course of action and when this Legislature is shut down for the very purpose it was meant for, which was to discuss important matters?” That’s what is happening here today. People who are going to be watching this on television will see a banner on their screen which says “a motion for time allocation.” It’s closure, plain and simple. Thank you, Mr. Caplan, for that.

We move on to Mr. Sorbara. This is December 3, 2001. He said, “I stand here today to condemn this time allocation motion and to say to you that—let me put it this way—governments are defeated for two reasons: one, because of what they do, because of the policies they bring forward and the things they do to the people of a place like Ontario, and the second reason they are defeated is the way in which they go about doing them.... This time allocation motion is just another example of why people are so anxious to get to the ballot box in a general election and send them packing.” We might live to see that. Then, to continue, Mr. Sorbara, 3 December 2001: “That’s why this time allocation motion is such a tragedy. I certainly will be voting against it.”

To continue, on 11 December 2001, Mr. Bradley, from Hansard again—Hansard is wonderful, isn’t it?

Mr. Kormos: Not Jim Bradley.

Ms. DiNovo: Absolutely Jim Bradley. He said, “How I wish we didn’t have to debate this time allocation

motion....” I think I’m speaking for a number of members here tonight on that one. I simply want to say that once again we see the government using its iron fist on the opposition. Well, one might ask whose iron fist this time. Then, he continues on November 28: “Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity, unfortunately, to speak on yet another time allocation motion. That is a motion, of course, where debate is choked off in the Legislative Assembly by the dictum of the government; that’s most unfortunate, but it does happen only too often.” Mr. Bradley continues—and not a fan was he of time allocation motions, apparently—on 3 December 2001: “I too will be opposing the time allocation motion....”

I think more and more people should realize that this Legislature has become largely irrelevant in the democratic process in Ontario. The member who served in a period of time from 1985-95 probably didn’t recognize the rules when he came back, how badly they’ve been mangled so that the House has become just about irrelevant. That’s unfortunate for all of us in the House. The government whip over there mumbles and grumbles in a gruff voice about this, but I tell him, if you ever have the opportunity to sit on this side of the House—and he has—you’ll find out what I’m talking about and why it’s relevant.

He continues, on 10 June 2002: “I’m disappointed to see that we’re into a time allocation on a bill of this kind. I really think that had the Legislature come back earlier, had the Legislature not been absent from sitting from the middle of December until the very middle of May, we would have had lots of time to be able to deal with this legislation. I know that many of my colleagues feel the same way....”

“I always deplore the fact that I have to speak on a time allocation motion. I would prefer to be talking about several important issues that could come before the House....”

But not these three members only; we continue on. Mrs. Dombrowsky, 2002, again speaking about time allocation motions—at this point, of course, they were in opposition: “I have to say that it is with regret that I have to stand in my place again today to speak to yet another time allocation motion. I think the point I would like to stress in this debate is that this is probably one of the most significant issues that this House will consider in terms of business on behalf of the people of the province of Ontario. The bill was introduced a little more than a week ago and already the government has moved to close debate on this most significant issue.” One wonders if Mrs. Dombrowsky couldn’t be saying the same thing tonight on this side of the House as well.

She goes on: “Here we go again. Sadly, again, we’re here debating a time allocation motion.

“Sadly, again I stand to speak to a time allocation motion. As a member who was elected ... I really thought that as a voice for the people of my part of Ontario I would have a reasonable opportunity to speak on their behalf and make points on behalf of the people of

Hastings–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, as well as the perspective of Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party. Here we are again addressing another time allocation motion on a matter of great importance to the people of Ontario.” I can’t think of a matter of much greater importance than a budget bill.

1920

Continuing along—because of course these honourable members are not alone, Mr. Gerretsen himself said in Hansard, on June 11, 2003, “It is shutting off debate,” which of course is exactly what this motion is designed to do. “We’ve got many, many members on this side of the House who want the opportunity to speak on this bill, and that’s being denied.”

He continued, “Closure is not the way a democratically elected Parliament should operate.”

He continued: “I’m pleased to join this debate.... Actually, I’m not pleased with the subject matter we’re dealing with, which is, of course, another time allocation motion. I know people have heard this before, but I think it’s absolutely outrageous the number of times this particular government has used closure, in which it’s cutting off”—this, of course, is what the government is doing—“the parliamentary debate that we believe in with our democratic system.”

He went on, in 2002: “We are losing our parliamentary democracy in this province.... Do not use time allocation again.”

Again, on June 26, 2002: “I’m pleased to wind up the debate on this time allocation motion. Actually, I’m not pleased. I don’t like time allocation motions. Basically it’s an undemocratic move by the government to invoke closure. We’ve seen it time after time.”

My, how some things change and still remain the same.

Again, not to leave any member out—Mr. Levac, on November 25, 2002: “First, in a nutshell, time allocation itself, the reality of what time allocation means: basically, the stopping of debate....”

“It’s a new device with which this government has been stifling democracy....”

“Stop the closure stuff.”

He continued: “I rise with some consternation as to whether or not speaking to this bill will have an impact on the government’s decision to use time allocation, so what I want to do first is explain very clearly to the people that time allocation is a tactic used by governments that simply want to remove the opportunity for too much debate”—it’s very eloquent—“for one of two reasons: they’re fearful of what might be said, or they need to better manage their time in terms of how the legislative agenda and calendar has come apart. So whether it’s the first one or the second one, it’s really irrelevant because the fact is the government shows it’s doing one of two things. It’s either not listening to the people out there ... or this government’s agenda is falling apart and they just simply have to get this legislation passed to prove that they’ve done some work, without

any dedication to finding out whether or not the people out there truly want to debate this issue.”

I think that’s the best one. Don’t you? I think that one should be framed. Absolutely. I could not agree more.

The question becomes: Why do they want to rush this particular bill through? What’s in it and what’s not in it?

First of all, what’s in this bill? Well, there’s a lot in this bill, of course. As one of my colleagues said, it’s good material to read if you happen to suffer from insomnia.

One colleague, Mr. Prue, who has done extensive work on the MPAC system and its lack of comprehension and lack of logic, notices that here is some attempt to deal with that by not dealing with it in the bill, which is to say, to put the whole issue on hold. Mr. Prue goes on to discuss what could be done—what should have been done—if one had followed the recommendations of our eminent Ombudsman and done something about it instead of putting the issue on hold until after the next election. Again I’m going to quote from Hansard, when he’s talking about what they’re doing with MPAC: “The other one is rather bizarre. The other one is forcing MPAC to release the information upon which its computer model is based. I don’t know why that takes two years of study either.”

He’s talking about a recommendation. That’s a good question: Why does it take two years of study to not only put in place these recommendations but just to release information upon which its computer model is based?

I have people coming into my constituency office, as I’m sure we all do, who want to know a simple reality; that is, how MPAC arrived at their assessment. I had a couple come in who have bachelor apartments they bought, really *pièds-à-terre* for downtown use, that have just been assessed at the rate of commercial hotel rooms for \$8,000 a year apiece and more. These are 400-square-foot bachelor units, \$8,000 a year. All they want to know is how they arrived at these seemingly outrageous assessments, but this bill doesn’t do that. It doesn’t attempt to answer that. It simply defers the entire debate. One wonders really why one would want to rush that through.

It does other things, though, too. It does things like tax ethanol. Again one might ask, for a government that says it’s on the side of the environment, why would they want to tax ethanol the way they tax gasoline? That’s a very strange move for a seemingly clean-burning fuel.

Another aspect of this bill that I think is most important—it’s interesting, just to digress for a moment, that here we’ve been asking for a number of moves from this government and we’re we’ve been told over and over again in this House—it’s becoming a refrain—“We’re working on it; we’re working on it. We know there’s more to be done. We’re working on it.” I’ve lost count of the number of times I’ve heard that over education, health, arts funding, the flawed funding formula, you name it. On a number of issues we’ve heard, “We’re working on it. We’re working on it.” Well, since 2003 they’ve been working on it, yet somehow, tonight, all of a sudden, there’s a sense of urgency in the House. All of

a sudden, tonight, we have to move so quickly that we have to close off debate. We can’t discuss this bill with any due process or any depth. We have to move right ahead.

Just a little earlier this evening, I had the pleasure of speaking at an arts day forum, and there were a number of artists here—the Ontario Arts Council, among others. Fiona Reid was in our gallery this afternoon—a great honour to us all. What they’d like to know is, where is the status-of-the-artist legislation? Not only where is the status-of-the-artist legislation, but where is the report that would lead to the status-of-the-artist legislation? We have our Minister of Culture, on May 15, on the record, saying that that was going to be imminent. We had that as a promise in the election in 2003, yet nothing, absolutely nothing, has been delivered in that venue. So again, obviously there’s no sense of urgency there. There’s no necessity to invoke closure about ramming through status-of-the-artist legislation.

There’s no sense of urgency for all of those people who are working below the poverty line at 40 hours a week and making \$7.75 an hour, many of them making less than they would on welfare with children. There’s no urgency to deal with that, to invoke closure around that and to ram some solution through for that.

We have 65,000 people waiting for affordable housing in the city, 122,000 households in the province. We have, as you heard Mr. Prue say this afternoon when there was a memorial unveiled again, those who are dying on our streets, one or two a week. There is no sense of urgency. There is no need to invoke closure about bringing in some housing policies or building the housing, the 20,000 units that were promised, even though we know they’re sitting on \$400 million. There’s no sense of urgency there. No, they’re working on that one; they’re working on it. Studies are being done, presumably. Committees are sitting somewhere, trying to decide when the shovel will go in the ground about that. No sense of urgency there.

There’s no sense of urgency, no sense of the need to invoke closure and limit debate around the fact that this government claws back the national child supplement. That’s \$200 million of federal money, and it’s from the backs of our poorest children, a move that should be considered appalling and disgusting. There’s no urgency on behalf of the children who are suffering in this province. There’s no urgency there to do something about the clawback, and again and again we’ve asked about that.

There’s no urgency to deal with the fact that our tuition fees have gone up 26%. There’s no urgency there to again invoke closure, to rush things through with this kind of bill around freezing the tuition fees, which you remember was the promise. There’s no urgency there.

We stand here in the House, in a province with a poverty rate of 15%. That compares most unfavourably with other jurisdictions. I think in particular of Ireland, where it’s 4%. There’s no urgency to deal with the poverty rate at 15%. These are real people; these are not just

statistics. There's no urgency to deal with a poverty rate that we should be ashamed of. There's no urgency there.

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There's not even any urgency, I've noticed, to really speak with any openness in this House about the \$40 billion that they're going to be spending on nuclear reactors, about which, I have to say, as I was knocking on doors campaigning in Parkdale–High Park during the by-election, I was met with horror at those same doors. There's no urgency to discuss that in depth, to look at the ramifications of what it would mean to spend that much money on nuclear reactors in a province when perhaps we should be reusing and recycling and looking at windmills and other forms of energy generation. There's no urgency there.

There's no urgency to deal with tenant issues in this province, even though we know that we don't have real rent control and that we're in real danger of losing affordable housing stock as it stands right now. In my own riding, we have about 10,000 units of privately held affordable housing stock that is in imminent danger of being lost. This is due to gentrification and the rise in real estate prices. There's no urgency there to bring in real rent control that would stay with the unit, not with the tenant. There's no urgency there.

In meeting with the police today, another group that came and that we honour today—we all went and enjoyed their food and their reception—there's no urgency there to deal with a serious shortfall in funding in our police departments. I went out on a drive-around on Friday night with 14 division—it was an honour to do so—and I was horrified at what I saw: a crumbling old building, short-staffed, emergency calls coming over the computer and no cars to send out to meet those emergency calls.

There is no urgency in dealing with the crumbling infrastructure of our cities. There's no urgency to invoke closure and a lack of debate about that so we can rush to a solution.

We would love to rush to solutions on any of those topics. Personally, I know in my riding it would be wonderful if this government acted more quickly. It would be wonderful if this government invoked this kind of motion over all of those kinds of bills that we would love to see given legs and given teeth, put into play. But no, a huge majority, money in the bank, and yet no will to really move on those issues of substance that affect the lives of people in all of our ridings.

I'm going to turn the floor over and leave some time for my honourable colleague. But perhaps it's good to stop the way I started, with that wonderful quote from my colleague across the floor, Mr. Levac, who said, when he described what a closure motion does, that it stifles debate and that it's done for only one of two reasons: "It's either not listening to the people out there ... or this government's agenda is falling apart and they just simply have to get this legislation passed to prove that they've done some work, without any dedication to finding out

whether or not the people out there truly want to debate this issue."

I'll leave it at that and ask: Do we want action? Absolutely. Do we want a limit on the debate on some motions? Why not? But not this motion; not this night. We want action on all of those other issues that really affect those people in our ridings.

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): For those of you at home who may be watching, you might say, "What is it that they're talking about here? Are we debating a bill?" We're not debating a bill. We're talking about a motion to end debate on a bill. You may say, "Why would you want to end debate on a bill?" Well, this is Bill 151, the Budget Measures Act, and you have a wide degree of latitude in what you want to talk about. So if you've been following this at home, you may think, "What are all of these people discussing? What is this Bill 151? What's it all about?"

Among the things in it:

—A new enhanced dividend tax credit to encourage investment in Ontario corporations. Is anybody against that? Not that I've heard.

—The enhancement of the interactive digital media tax credit: a wonderful thing for our arts community, and not terribly controversial.

—Giving municipalities more flexibility and additional provincial support in funding brownfield redevelopment and public infrastructure. Nobody is here complaining about that. In fact, people would be saying, "Well, what are you debating about? Get on with it."

—Increasing the income threshold of the Ontario property and sales tax credits for senior couples. So all the folks at home who are thinking, "We're getting a little on in years and we'd kind of like to stay in our home; maybe it would be possible for us to get a little bit of a break so that we can stay in our home a little longer," that's what Bill 151 is about. That's why we want to get on with it.

The balance of the things of substance in here, most people would say—okay, excluding income received under the federal universal child care benefit from eligibility calculations for the Ontario property and sales tax credits, da-dah, da-dah, da-dah—the rest of it, as my colleague from Parkdale–High Park said, is truly is a non-prescription cure for insomnia. There's nothing here that's controversial. That's why we want to get on with it. A budget measure is a motion of confidence in the government, which is what this one is, and it's a measure that says, "Let's get on with it." That's what this one does. It says, "Enough debate." If this were happening in a boardroom, people would say, "There's nothing here that's in any way controversial. Pass it. Move on to something of more substance." The previous speaker, my colleague from Parkdale–High Park, was talking about an awful lot of things that this House needs to address. But before we can do it, let's dispose of this bill, and that's what this one is about.

Just before going on to some remarks I want to make on the bill: My colleague raised a rhetorical point. She

said, “Why does it take two years of study to alter a computer model for the Municipal Property Assessment Corp.? I used to be a software engineer. I did websites for small companies before I was elected. Just to put a little perspective on it, the best software company in the world is Microsoft. You say, why does it take two years to alter a computer model at MPAC that, admittedly, will affect several million dwellings and properties in Ontario? At Microsoft, where 9,000 full-time employees work on a single product—that’s Windows—it took fully not two years, not three or four years but five years to move from the last operating system, which you’ve probably got on your computer—Windows XP—to the next operating system, which will be on your computer when you buy a new one next year: Windows Vista. The thing with software is that you don’t have to get it perfect. You’ve got to get it right. That’s what this is about. This is not about getting it perfect, because people here are very fallible; this is about getting it right. Getting it right, especially on a budget measure, means that a government can keep its commitments. For me in western Mississauga, my government keeping its commitments means that I get to keep my commitments to the people who sent me here to work on their behalf. Getting it right, passing a budget measure like this, being able to get on with the next set of priorities, means that we can finish the job we started at the Lisgar GO train station. We announced it in 2005. We’re breaking ground this year. We’re going to be getting on the train next year. That’s what it means to keep your commitment.

Getting it right, getting on with it, means that at the Credit Valley Hospital, where we desperately need new capital infrastructure for a hospital that hasn’t been able to materially expand since it first opened 21 years ago—this bill will allow us to allocate the funds to break the ground, to start the steel work in 2007, on schedule, get building the hospital, and look after the expectant moms who come in there and want to deliver their babies in one of the best hospitals in Ontario. That’s Credit Valley Hospital.

Getting on with it means that we can pursue debate on Bill 124. For all of you out there who were trained in another country, who built your careers or your experience in another country, getting on with it means that we can debate Bill 124 and we can pass that measure to enable Ontario’s regulated professions to effectively, transparently, economically and in a timely way convert your credentials, your experience and your certifications to their Canadian equivalent.

In western Mississauga, getting on with it means that the Minister for Public Infrastructure Renewal can push forward on his plans and we can debate them at length in this House. Those plans include, among other things to help us in western Mississauga in the years to come, a third track on the Milton GO line. That’s what this is all about. That’s why we’ve time-allocated this bill. This bill truly is a non-prescription sedative. There’s nothing in here that anybody quarrels with, and that’s why it’s time-allocated—not so that we can sit here and take up the

people’s time in their Legislature, in this wonderful place that all of us have the privilege and the responsibility of coming here to serve; not so that we can debate, in a very sterile fashion, things that we all agree on, and we all agree on everything that’s in this particular Budget Measures Act. Let’s just get on with it. It would be the same thing in your company, when you’re debating the trivia: Get on with it. That’s what a time allocation motion is about.

This is not the government that we had the last time around that time-allocated everything. In this government we’ve time-allocated—what was it that the Minister for Public Infrastructure Renewal said earlier?

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Hon. Mr. Caplan: Seven per cent.

Mr. Delaney: Seven per cent of our bills. That’s one in 14, not 70. Seven per cent. What are the ones that get time-allocated? Frankly, if you’re members of the opposition, you’re not going to vote for a government budget bill, so you’ll drag that debate out as long as you can. The government has taken bills to committee and we have debated them, including this one here, Bill 151. I’ve spoken to it in the House. We’ve debated it at length, and it’s time to get on with it. That’s what this time allocation motion is all about. It’s a time allocation motion that says to the members of this House, “We’ve talked about it. There’s not that much here that’s controversial. We are in accord with its basic principles. Let’s get on with it.”

Mr. John O’Toole (Durham): It’s a pleasure to speak on this time allocation motion, which has been described by some members—I think more recently by the member from Parkdale–High Park, who put on the record a number of comments that were made by the then opposition, the Liberal members. They were commenting on this abuse of parliamentary process, that it was actually sort of undemocratic, and made a lot of outrageous comments. In fact, they should look in the mirror, because this bill, Bill 151, that’s being time-allocated, is indeed one of more powerful bills. This bill is actually a budget measures bill and in its own context is very much a work in progress, I would say. If you look at it, and for the members, I believe this has some 25 schedules—35, actually—and it also has some subschedules from A to Z.9. It’s very long and convoluted. If you look at the beginning, which is normally the preamble or the purpose section of the bill, it’s a work in progress for sure.

If you just start to read through it and look at some of the schedules, you start to find out that now you understand that this is—how would you describe it?—exempting full debate on a very primary and important issue. That’s what this is about. They’re ramming this through. I would say that the members who have spoken on it would probably agree. I wouldn’t want to attribute anything to them, but it’s a very complex bill amending many, many statutes and other schedules.

There are a couple here that are worthy of just a few comments in the brief time I have. I think it’s in one of the first sections. Let me just look at the bill here. It’s actually in schedule A of the Assessment Act. It says,

“Currently, the Assessment Act governs the assessment of land for the purposes of municipal and school taxes. Amendments throughout the act provide, in addition, for the assessment of land in non-municipal territory”—that’s provincial governance there—“for the purposes of taxes levied under the Provincial Land Tax Act, 2006.” That’s actually more revenue. What’s the accountability on the expenditure side of that new revenue they’re going to get? To some extent, these unorganized territories are being funded in some way today, and now they’re going to ultimately raise the taxes.

There are two or three things in here. There’s another one you need to be aware of.

Ringling of cellphone.

Mr. O’Toole: The phone is ringing.

Under paragraph 6 of section 3(1)—

Mr. Mario Sergio (York West): Pick up your phone. Somebody’s calling you, John.

Mr. O’Toole: Yes, well, you really should be listening a little more accurately.

Time allocation—they’re not even respecting the debate. Here they are playing with their cellphones. This is the arrogance that’s starting to creep into the Liberal caucus. I see it and I sense it, if you go back to the history and how they were so indignant about the time when we were in government and now. But this section here is quite interesting too. It says that “land used and occupied by a public hospital that receives provincial aid under the Public Hospitals Act is exempt from tax.” So these are properties that are provincial institutional situations and they’re exempt from tax. Also, children’s treatment centres are exempted from tax. Who’s going to make up that revenue loss for the municipality? That’s obsequious downloading, in my view. We have also land use by veterans; these would be Legions for the most part. There was an exemption under the current Assessment Act for municipalities to exempt certain property classes or members of property classes. And there are retroactivity provisions in this bill, which is another trademark Liberal scheme.

I would say that what’s most troubling is two things: First of all, it’s a large and complex bill, and secondly, it’s being time-allocated. As the member from Parkdale–High Park quoted, a number of then-opposition members—I should be clear on that: They were then-opposition members, and I should name them: Caplan, Bradley, Dombrowsky, Gerretsen, and the list goes on. But quite honestly, the more recent one was Mr. Levac, now the government whip. And they said it’s symptomatic of a government that’s not listening, an agenda that’s failing the people. I think that’s exactly what this evidence is speaking to.

What is more troubling, if you look even to the commentaries on the economy in Ontario, is we’ve got hundreds of thousands of job losses in the manufacturing sector, including in the pulp and paper sector in the north and all across the province, and they have no plan to deal with this decline in the fundamentals of the economy, the manufacturing sector.

Now, I wouldn’t want anyone to take my word for it. I’m just going to quote or reference one article here. This is in the Toronto Star of October 9; it’s a Liberal-friendly paper. Many refer to it as the Liberal briefing notes. It’s an article by Ian Urquhart, and it’s “Sorbara’s Leaky Fiscal Projections Grim Omen for Liberals.” I think we’ve struck upon it. This is why they’re ramming this through, time-allocating it, limiting debate, a fulsome discussion of these many things, reviewing property assessment and freezing assessment for three years until after the election, pushing the trouble out. I would just put that it’s worth recognizing that even some revered economists like the Toronto Dominion Bank revised provincial economic forecasts last month. The Toronto Dominion Bank summed up the situation neatly, “For the manufacturing-based economies of central Canada and some parts of the Atlantic that have recently struggled under the weight of a high Canadian dollar and elevated energy prices,” both of which have been caused by this government, “the dampening influence of weaker demand growth Stateside”—that’s the US economy sliding, the housing sector etc.—“has effectively quashed hopes of any meaningful recovery”—in the Ontario economy—“until 2008.”

Their forecasts are out by almost one complete point, and for every point in GDP, if it goes down one point in the GDP—and people are listening—it means, in real revenue loss, about \$600 million to \$700 million. But actually there’s an implication for the expenditure side too, because people need retraining and redevelopment, and you need to make investments. So you’ve got the loss of revenue of \$600 million plus additional expenditures—for every point, it’s about \$1 billion of adjustment in the economy.

This article goes on—and I would say that the Toronto Dominion Bank economist is one of the more respected economists, and he’s citing “Sorbara’s Leaky Fiscal Projections Grim Omen for Liberals” in Ontario. That’s only one part of the story. They’re rushing this through. They’re time-allocating it because they don’t want the people of Ontario to know that they’re in trouble. They’re doing what Mr. Levac said in his remarks when they were in opposition. He’s saying that the plan is not working and they’re running for cover. I’m seriously disappointed that a government, especially with a budget bill, would take these measures to stifle the democratic process.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It’s a delight for me to have the opportunity to make some comments on this bill this evening and on closure. There are a number of positive things. I had the opportunity to be in Peterborough last week during constituency week and talk to a number of particular seniors who are delighted that we are increasing the income threshold for Ontario property and sales tax credits that certainly benefit our seniors to a great extent.

It’s interesting. I heard comments from my colleagues to the right of me. I remember, as a member of city council between 1990 and 1995, when the then government of

Mr. Rae, under the social contract—I believe it was Bill 158—

Mr. Kormos: That's your Bob Rae as Liberal leader.
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Mr. Leal: I don't support him. I want to indicate very clearly to my colleague from Niagara South that I'm not supporting Mr. Rae.

But let me tell you about Bill 58; let's talk about Bill 58 for a moment. Now, that was an interesting piece of legislation, because it took virtually every contract with public sector workers in the province of Ontario and went just like this: Threw them out the door. I remember talking to firefighters and police officers and teachers and my good friends who were employed at public works in the city of Peterborough and how let down they were by Premier Rae and members of the cabinet. Four of them are still sitting in this caucus. I'd like to get on the record who they were. The member from Trinity–Spadina was part of the executive council then. The member from Timmins–James Bay was a member of that executive council. The member from Kenora–Rainy River was part of that executive council, as was the member from Nickel Belt.

Let's talk about the mechanics of Bill 58 for a bit—one of the most draconian pieces of legislation that was ever brought forward in this Legislature. There were no public hearings: wham, bam, it was through the House, and, as I said, ripped up all the collective bargaining agreements in the province of Ontario.

Interjection.

Mr. Leal: To those public servants who remember those very dark days, we like to remind them from time to time what happened during that period of time.

It's interesting when you look at some of the schedules that are included in this bill.

Interjection.

Mr. Leal: I've hit a sore point. They don't like to be reminded about Bill 58 and that social contract.

One of the reasons why we need to move on with this piece of legislation and bring in time allocation is because there are a number of important bills that are still on the docket that are of great importance to the people in the province of Ontario. I'd like to talk about Bill 152 for a moment, the bill that was brought forward by my colleague the Minister of Government Services. Last week I had the opportunity to meet with a number of citizens' groups in the riding of Peterborough. They're certainly very concerned about mortgage fraud and identity theft. Two of the key elements that are in Bill 152 deal with mortgage fraud and identity theft. Certainly, the member from Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford has done a good job to highlight those concerns. Hopefully, this bill will go to committee—an opportunity to have some hearings and some amendments. But it's an issue that is of real concern to many seniors in the province of Ontario and is certainly highlighted by a number of newspaper articles that have appeared in the media showing a number of very innocent people who have witnessed the greatest investment they make in purchasing a home destroyed

through mortgage fraud and indeed sometimes theft of their identity.

There are a number of other initiatives in here, such as the universal child credit benefit. Ontarians who qualify for their new federal UCCB will get to keep the benefits they're entitled to receive under the Ontario property and sales tax credits and the Ontario child care supplement for working families. We believe this is an important initiative to support families with young children as such. The UCCB should not affect a family's eligibility for assistance from the province.

There's the Canadian Public Accountability Board, and some changes for taxes in the province of Ontario.

We have brought in a two-year freeze for assessments in the province of Ontario, certainly an opportunity to look at current value assessment, which was brought in in 1998. To be fair, one of the premises for bringing in CVA in 1998 was that there was a great discrepancy in assessments here in Toronto, where at the time homes in Rosedale, a part of Toronto, were assessed at a 1950 level, and I know my friends from Scarborough experienced a situation where many of the newer homes in Scarborough were assessed in 1980. We had homes of similar size, one being in Rosedale, one being in Scarborough, and the assessments were dramatically different. So the government of the day looked at that problem and thought that it might be resolved by bringing in current value assessment to have more equalization of assessment across the province of Ontario.

But indeed, what has happened—I know that in my riding, we've seen a spike in recreational properties, particularly in areas where those who have the financial means are prepared to pay a substantial premium to acquire a property. What happens through CVA is that that increased cost of a property ripples through other properties in the area, because CVA is based on the premise of a willing seller, a willing buyer, and that is the way properties are assessed through the computer modelling. So during these two years, through the assessment freeze, there will be a number of real opportunities to look at some of the problems that have cropped up since 1998 and come up with some solutions to make the CVA system much more transparent and indeed fair. It may mean that we might have to bring in a number of classes within CVA to try to smooth out the spikes that we've seen on some properties across the province of Ontario.

The other issue: We are taking some time to review who does what, the exchange of services, the financing of those services, between the government of Ontario and municipalities. We have made substantial progress. We have uploaded land ambulance and public health. We have provided increased financial dollars through the move ahead program and an opportunity to strengthen the fiscal position of many municipalities across the province of Ontario. But more needs to be done.

In fact, one way that we'll be able to address the \$3-billion fiscal imbalance between municipalities and the provincial government is to solve the fiscal imbalance that we have currently with the federal government. It

has been estimated that, of the recent paydown of debt, some \$13 billion, about 40% of that figure was generated by the hard-working men and women in the province of Ontario. So as we move forward, hopefully all provincial Premiers will have a positive dialogue and ongoing discussions with the federal government, and that we can come to grips to address that fiscal imbalance, where the provinces have the responsibility for delivering many of the big-ticket items such as health care and education. We know that in fiscal 2006-07 the government of Ontario will spend about \$35 billion in the province of Ontario.

Over the last three years, I think it's fair to say, we've been fairly selective in using time-allocation motions, and we've used them sparingly. When you look at the record of the previous eight years of Progressive Conservative administration and go back to the Hampton-Rae government between 1990 and 1995—when you compare those records, we compare very favourably with the use of time allocation motions.

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One of the reasons we are bringing it forward: As I said, there are a number of other major legislative initiatives that we need to move through and to create some space on the legislative calendar in order to move things through. I've already highlighted Bill 152, and I know that when you're talking to people in my riding, they want to see a number of the provisions of that bill brought through.

One of the provisions that's a particular interest of mine is the banning of advertising of online gaming sites. It's interesting; that's an issue that has had a lot of play in the media of late. The government of Great Britain is in the process of organizing a seven-country summit to deal with that particular issue. The United States Senate and Congress have been dealing with that bill, and indeed we are prepared to take some action here in the province of Ontario so that we continue to support the horse-racing industry in Ontario. That has been, to date, one of the healthier parts of the agricultural economy in the province of Ontario. Indeed, the other side of that coin is the issue of problem gamblers. When I've chatted with a number of people in social service divisions and departments across the province of Ontario, they're seeing an increase in people who are coming into their departments with regard to online gaming. So I'm pleased that Minister Phillips picked up what essentially was my private member's bill, Bill 60, to incorporate that into his omnibus bill dealing with strengthening a number of consumer protection acts in the province of Ontario.

There are also some changes that will come into place with the provincial land tax to bring about additional fairness whereby similar properties in certain sections in the province will now pay similar taxes.

The other thing, hopefully, during the review of assessments in Ontario is the issue of trailer parks. I've long been an advocate that perhaps we should move to a sticker system for trailers in Ontario. Indeed, when you chat with municipalities in the province where they have

trailer parks and want to make sure, just on a seasonal basis—many of them would like to go to a sticker system whereby the respective municipality would issue a licensing sticker, similar to what we have on our licence plates today, and attach that to the trailer, with the municipality establishing a value to cover the limited police service, ambulance service and garbage pickup that they would provide to that park. So I do think that is a real opportunity to make some progress in that area.

I'd be remiss if I didn't congratulate my good friend Paul Ayotte, who won in a landslide victory last night in Peterborough to become the new mayor. I had the opportunity to serve with Mr. Ayotte on council and I know that he will do a very good job as he assumes the role of mayor of Peterborough in early December, taking over from Her Worship, outgoing Mayor Sylvia Sutherland, who has the distinction of being the longest-serving mayor in the history of the city of Peterborough: some 15 years. She decided to retire and not seek re-election and to go back to one of her great loves in life, which was writing.

It's interesting that Mayor Sutherland started her journalistic career right here in Toronto at the Toronto Telegram, covering city council. She used to share with me the late Margaret Campbell, who was on council at that time. Margaret Campbell was noted always to provide a very good quote that a journalist could provide in a daily newspaper. Sylvia did cover Toronto city council for the Telegram until the Telegram's demise. So we're looking forward—perhaps Ms. Sutherland will go back to being a journalist in the Peterborough area. I know she likes to write travelogues. She will be sorely missed, as she provided dynamic and outstanding leadership when the flood hit Peterborough on July 15, 2004.

I know that my time is winding down and some other people will share with us, but there are a number of schedules in this act: schedule E, which is the capital investment plan, which has impact through the Public Hospitals Act, municipalities and universities. Schedule F deals with community small business investment funds.

So when you take the time to go through Bill 151—it's An Act to enact various 2006 Budget measures and to enact, amend or repeal various Acts—it certainly will have an impact on many of the things we do in Ontario. But I would also be remiss if I didn't have the opportunity to chat about the education system. My wife, Karan, is a teacher of some 20 years, so I do spend fair amount of time with those in the teaching profession. It's interesting, the new spirit of optimism that you can see in the classroom today, and having had the opportunity during Remembrance Week last week to be in several schools, to be there shoulder to shoulder with veterans from the Second World War and from the Korean War and peace-keeping missions, and an individual who actually just came back from our mission in Afghanistan. I want to get on the record that we need to support those young men and women unconditionally as they go about their task in a very, very serious situation, a very

challenging situation, and one that's fraught with many dangers.

I had the opportunity to be in schools and chat with teachers, chat with students and chat with parents about the optimism and the positive feeling that is in the classroom today. There has been peace and stability for the last three years and it has brought about a very conducive learning environment. This is talking not necessarily to the union officials within the teachers' union, but these are the rank-and-file teachers who go about in a quiet, professional way and who, in very diligent manner, day in and day out, provide the very best education to our young men and women in the province of Ontario. It goes without saying that, outside of one's parents or other family members, we probably spend more time with teachers than with any other individual. I always like to say, when I have the opportunity to be in a classroom, that teachers do provide a compass for individuals for their lives, and whether they're difficult or good times, that compass is always available, and I take time to thank our teachers.

Another group of individuals certainly brought home during Remembrance Day are those men and women who are in uniform, whether it's police officers or firefighters or people who serve with us in emergency measures service. We often just take those individuals for granted, so I always like to stress that we should take the opportunity, when we have a moment, to go up and shake their hands and just thank them for the job well done that they do for each of us each and every day. We had the opportunity to meet with the Ontario Police Association today. I talked to Dave McFadden and Ted Boynton, who represent the Peterborough-Lakefield police service, both of them with more than 25 years of dedicated devotion to the police service in our community. I had an opportunity to chat with them about their concerns and what support they need, not only from the municipal level government but from the province. Tomorrow, I understand that firefighters will be here at Queen's Park again to share with us their concerns and just to highlight again the very demanding jobs that they have and how they work for us each and every day.

Bill 151, we'll deal through a time allocation. Many of the measures in this bill are indeed needed, and I ask our folks in the Legislature to move ahead with this time allocation to move this through so we will have the opportunity to get on with other bills in this House that the good citizens of Ontario are expecting us to pass.

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Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I appreciate the opportunity to address this time allocation motion. I think it's very important to have a fulsome debate, a proper debate, on budget measures legislation such as we find in Bill 151.

I also have been reading Hansard, a document I take very seriously, and I've come across a number of quotations as well. We heard some references. The member for Parkdale-High Park made reference to words that were spoken a number of years ago. Looking back to pre-2003,

it's very clear that this government will say just about anything it needs to to try to get elected.

I have a quote as well. "I have to say how disappointed I am again to have to speak to yet another one of the many closure motions that have been brought by this government." I'm referring here to the words of Minister Dombrowsky. This was December 5, 2001. I will say that at that time that particular minister was a committed anti-time-allocation crusader.

We need only look further at words that were spoken. October 21, 2002—

Interjection.

Mr. Barrett: We've got a bit of interest across the way now.

"Here we go again. Sadly, again, we're here debating a time allocation motion."

I have another quote. October 15, 2002: "I'm very disappointed, again, in my role as the elected voice of the people from my riding to have to speak to a time allocation motion."

June 10, 2002: "I have to say that it is with regret that I have to stand in my place again today to speak to yet another time allocation motion."

On October 31, 2000—that would be Halloween—"Sadly, again I stand to speak to a time allocation motion."

It's obvious that we really can't take much credence from anything that particular cabinet minister—in this case, the Minister of Agriculture—had to say with respect to opposition to the time allocation process, a process that we are now debating this evening, a process brought forward by the government opposite.

When any group of people—in this case, the McGuinty government—are caught, over and over again, changing their minds, making stuff up or generally saying things they know they don't believe in, we have to ask: Why would any group of people do that? Are there any root causes? In this circumstance, and from my reading on this, the inherent refusal to essentially tell it like it is—I use the term "promise breakers." I suppose you could look at the thesaurus. I think of bamboozlers or fact distorters. We all know that, in many cases, this particular Liberal government is far beyond any of those characterizations.

We have seen how Minister Dombrowsky quickly changed her tune about time allocation motions once she gained power, and there's evidence of that here this evening. Also, farmers across the province of Ontario have come to realize how this government has changed its mind with respect to the importance of the business of farming in this great province.

We all recall the particular plank in the Liberal platform. I'll quote again. "We will make the Ministry of Agriculture a lead ministry." And to fulfill that promise requires budgeting. We're debating a budget motion this evening. I would put forward that many farmers are furious to know that they've been had by this government, and this budget bill, Bill 151, from my reading, really does nothing to address that.

We did hear this evening that through this measure, they will be putting a tax on ethanol. I'm not sure how that is meant to encourage the use of an alternate fuel like ethanol in the province of Ontario. Last October—this would be a year ago October—Minister Dombrowsky admitted that “CAIS has not worked well for grains and oilseeds.” Since then, we have seen essentially no commitment to fix that particular problem. It's deferred to the federal government. We have seen a volley of insults lobbed towards Ottawa. I guess we were not surprised to see what happened when Minister Ramsay, minister of aboriginal affairs, flew to Ottawa several weeks ago, sat in Jim Prentice's office, never did have a meeting, got on the plane and came back home. This is what happens when that kind of a relationship deteriorates between the federal and provincial levels.

When I make reference to CAIS, it's very important to distinguish, for budgeting reasons obviously, between agricultural support and agricultural stabilization. The United States does have agricultural support. They support agriculture as a strategic sector of the economy. In Canada, we have stabilization. We keep farm income stable. Sadly, at the present time, they are essentially stabilizing at a very low level. There's a little bit of light at the end of the tunnel with respect to soybean and corn prices, but essentially we have gone through a very dismal three-year period in the province as far as farm income.

Contrast that to the United States. The last three years have been the three best years, the three most profitable years for farm income in the United States. At the same time, we in Ontario are pretty well at the breaking point, and what do we see? We see further delay, we see no evidence of any reaching out to the federal government, and it's reflected well by signs that I have seen at farm rallies. I recall these signs in Ottawa, in London, farm rallies here in Toronto and Guelph. One sign comes to mind, directed towards this present government with respect to their lack of policy concerning farmers. The signs would read, “Study, stall, and study.”

Two weeks ago, I rose in this Legislature to ask the Minister of Agriculture what she intended to do to transform the CAIS program. I asked if there had been an analysis—this was an analysis requested by farmers—to determine whether farmers are better or worse off now compared to what I consider the benefits of the old NISA program. What I received that day essentially was a vitriolic tirade. Farmers do not want false rage from their Minister of Agriculture; they want support. They need support. They need something beyond stabilization of three dismal years in the industry. From my reading of this particular budget bill, there's nothing in there for farmers. The only item I see that relates to agriculture is jacking up taxes on ethanol.

Farmers are very disturbed with the process. The CAIS application forms are complex, very difficult for a farm couple to complete, let alone—very difficult for their chartered accountant to complete.

Again, we have a Minister of Agriculture who continues to refuse to even examine how farmers would fare under the old system. As far as the new system, there has been no indication, no reaching out at all to the federal government to try, in the minister's words, to transform the CAIS program.

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Mr. Kormos: I've listened oh, so carefully to the government apologists for this guillotine motion, this closure motion. What they fail to mention is that the closure motion doesn't just end debate now on second reading—take a look at the motion; it limits public hearings to but one day. Think about it. Ms. DiNovo already said, “This is democratic reform?” “This is inclusive politics?” she queried sarcastically. One day of public hearings, and that day includes clause-by-clause consideration. That is an affront to every resident of this province.

It's one thing for this government to treat opposition members—heck, not just opposition members but its own backbenchers; why, not just its own backbenchers but most of its own front bench—with disdain and disregard, but now it's snubbing, thumbing its nose, giving the proverbial finger to every single Ontarian in this province. While, on the one hand, some of the government-paid apologists say, “Oh, the bill means nothing. The bill's irrelevant. It's just something to allow us to move forward,” you've got others who say, “But the bill is substantive. It does all these things: (a), (b), (c), (d), and (e).”

In a democracy, in the kind of democracy that most Ontarians believe in, the public has a right to participate in the democratic process. That's what public hearings are all about, Mr. Runciman. It's one thing to say, “The government is tired of the inevitable criticism it receives during the course of second reading debate.” I understand that. It's another thing entirely for this government to say that it's tired of the people of Ontario and doesn't want to hear from them either, because that's what this time allocation motion does.

I tell you, even further, on third reading, debate will be but a few hours over the course of but one sessional day. See, that's why time allocation motions, these jackboot tactics, are so reprehensible, so offensive. That's why. There's a parliamentary process. Good grief; every member of this chamber joined veterans at cenotaphs around Ontario this past week, not only during the week and the weekend prior but certainly on November 11, and we made note of the fact, as we stood shoulder to shoulder, as it was down in Port Colborne on Saturday morning, in a cold, drizzling rain, with vets now in their 80s, stooped, grey, but still standing firm—every one of us reflected that not only did these men and women fight for the right for people in Europe and Asia to elect governments democratically and to have a democratic process, but young Canadians in some of the most dangerous places in the world right now are fighting to do the same. And how does this government mark Remembrance Day? With a time allocation motion.

I say, fine; if the government wants to end second reading debate, although there are precious few members of the chamber who have had an opportunity to participate in that debate on what is a substantial bill with a whole lot of provisions, I tell you, that should cause a great deal of concern, and provisions, I tell you, that New Democrats have no interest in being associated with—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean–Carleton): I agree.

Mr. Kormos: The member says. And now to exclude the public from that most noteworthy of democratic processes, public hearing participation, to deny them that opportunity—you see, that’s why, in November 2001, Mr. Caplan, now the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, said here in the chamber, “I usually start off my remarks by saying it’s a pleasure to speak to something on behalf of the people of Don Valley East, but it really isn’t. This is yet another closure motion, a gag order on the Legislature. How could it ever be a pleasure to speak to that when that’s the normal course of action and when this Legislature is shut down for the very purpose it was meant for, which was to discuss important matters?” Those are not my words; they’re Mr. Caplan’s words.

One Mr. Sorbara, the real Premier, now Minister of Finance—

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): He showed up occasionally in opposition.

Mr. Kormos: He showed up often enough to pull the strings and make the marionettes dance.

December 2001, Mr. Sorbara: “I stand here today to condemn this time allocation motion and to say to you that—let me put it this way—governments are defeated for two reasons: one, because of what they do, because of the policies they bring forward and the things they do to the people of a place like Ontario, and the second reason they are defeated is the way in which they go about doing them.... This time allocation motion is just another example of why people are so anxious to get to the ballot box in a general election and send them packing.”

Later on, in the same comments, he says: “That’s why this time allocation motion is such a tragedy. I surely will be voting against it.”

The government House Leader was as articulate and eloquent and passionate an opponent of time allocation motions as one could find until he found the back seat of that luxurious state limo.

December 11, 2001, Mr. Bradley, whom I have the greatest regard for—I consider him a very good friend: “How I wish we didn’t have to debate this time allocation motion.... I simply want to say that once again we see the government using its iron fist on the opposition.”

November 28, 2001: “Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity, unfortunately, to speak on yet another time allocation motion. That is a motion, of course, where debate is choked off in the Legislative Assembly by the dictum of the government.”

December 3, 2001, Mr. Bradley, now Minister of Tourism: “I too will be opposing the time allocation motion.... But I think more and more people should realize that this Legislature has become largely irrelevant

in the democratic process in Ontario.” You see, that’s what time allocation motions do. That’s what closure motions do. That’s what guillotine motions do. They make the Legislature irrelevant. And they not only make the Legislature irrelevant; they make the public irrelevant.

One Mr. John Gerretsen, now the Minister of Municipal Affairs, June 11, 2003, speaking about a time allocation motion, said: “It is shutting off debate. We’ve got many, many members on this side of the House who want the opportunity to speak on this bill, and that’s being denied.”

November 19, 2002, Mr. Gerretsen: “Closure is not the way a democratically elected Parliament should operate.” Mr. Gerretsen was protesting on behalf of the people of Ontario. Where is Mr. Gerretsen’s voice now? I hear nothing.

Ah, a senior member of the government caucus, Mr. Levac, now; as he was then, the member for Brant, November 25, 2002: “First, in a nutshell,” Mr. Levac says, “time allocation itself, the reality of what time allocation means: basically, the stopping of debate.... it’s a new device with which this government has been stifling democracy.” “Stifling democracy,” Mr. Levac says in 2002 about time allocation. The silence today is deafening.

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November 25, 2002, same comments somewhat later, Mr. Levac: “Stop the closure stuff.” Mr. Levac was a vocal, passionate advocate for democratic process in 2002: “Stop the closure stuff.”

December 11, 2000—

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): Not Levac again.

Mr. Kormos: —Mr. Levac: “I rise with some consternation as to whether or not speaking to this bill will have an impact on the government’s decision to use time allocation, so what I want to do first is explain very clearly to the people that time allocation is a tactic used by governments that simply want to remove the opportunity for too much debate ... they’re fearful of what might be said, or they need to better manage their time in terms of how the legislative agenda and calendar has come apart.... the fact is the government shows it’s doing one of two things. It’s either not listening to the people out there ... or this government’s agenda is falling apart.” Mr. Levac on time allocation, 2001, 2002.

I was intrigued earlier in the course of this debate with the obsession that the member for Peterborough has with Liberal leadership candidate Bob Rae. I want to make it very clear that, should Mr. Rae become the leader of the Liberal Party, I have every intention of spending a great deal of time across the province in the course of the next federal election, telling Ontarians about social contract; telling Ontarians about defunding pension plans, another brilliant Bob Rae strategy; telling Ontarians about casino gaming, another brilliant Bob Rae strategy; telling Ontarians about the promise to install public auto insurance—Mr. Bob Rae, a political leader who would do or say anything he had to get elected. Why, truly, he established

his credentials as a Liberal a long time ago, didn't he, Speaker?

I want to tell you, the member from Peterborough caused me to reflect on what the definition might be of someone who deserts a party or a cause. I found it very interesting that someone who might desert a party or a cause is, in the Canadian Oxford English dictionary, called a rat; how interesting. Indeed, it was Winston Churchill who said, when he ratted twice—he left the Conservatives to sit with the Liberals and then he left the Liberals to sit with the Conservatives—“Anyone can rat, but it takes a certain amount of ingenuity to re-rat.” So let's understand that a rat is a rat.

Interjections.

Mr. Kormos: Well, look, here's the definition. Here's the dictionary. It's the Canadian Oxford English. It defines a rat as someone who deserts a party or cause. I just protected Mr. Yakabuski to a great extent, to the point where he'll be allowed to maintain his singing career. I expect him to express gratitude.

Did I mention to you that New Democrats aren't going to support this time allocation motion?

Mr. Runciman: Yes, once or twice.

Mr. Kormos: Did I mention to you that it's shameful, shameful, shameful that the public is going to be denied the opportunity to participate in any meaningful public hearing around this bill, a bill about which—

Interjections.

Mr. Kormos: Mr. Yakabuski and Mr. Sorbara exchange here in the Legislature.

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): You're supposed to use riding names.

Mr. Kormos: Mr. Sorbara interjects, and he's quite right. The Minister of Finance is here tonight, I trust using the balance of his time to explain to the people of Ontario why they won't be allowed meaningful participation in public hearings. Because, you see, Mr. Sorbara, the Minister of Finance, may want to explain in the time that's going to be available to him why, on December 3, 2001, he said, “That's why this time allocation motion is such a tragedy. I certainly will be voting against it.”

On that same day—and perhaps the Minister of Finance, later this evening, before we reach the hour of 9:20, will explain why in December 2001 he said, “I stand here today to condemn this time allocation motion and to say to you that—let me put it this way—governments are defeated for two reasons: one, because of what they do, because of the policies they bring forward and the things they do to the people of a place like Ontario, and the second reason they are defeated is the way in which they go about doing them.... This time allocation motion is just another example of why people are so anxious to get to the ballot box in a general election and send them packing.”

So the Minister of Finance, in 2001, condemns time allocation motions. And I wonder what he has to say about this time allocation motion. Let's be very, very

clear, and perhaps I wasn't sufficiently clear when I first spoke to the matter when I became distracted by rats.

Interjection.

Mr. Kormos: Mr. Yakabuski interjects.

Let's understand that this time allocation motion could have merely terminated debate at second reading stage. It didn't have to effectively deny public hearings. It didn't have to, as it does, restrict third reading debate to what will amount to a mere handful of hours—two or three at best.

Mr. Yakabuski: No meaningful debate on third reading.

Mr. Kormos: More importantly, there's no public participation in committee. For three years, members of the opposition and these poor backbenchers in the rump have lived with and tolerated the disdain that the government, the little inner circle, the Premier and his éminence grise, have displayed towards them. I understand their frustration, but there's a time when backbenchers are given an opportunity to stand up and confront those same people who promised them the world—I'm talking about their Premier's office staff, the minions behind the Speaker—but who leave them to, with great frustration, while away time in the rump.

The government can't have it both ways. The member for Mississauga West said that this bill was nothing, really. That was the essence of his comments. “It's just a get-on-with-it bill. The bill means nothing, really. There is nothing substantive in there.” Then the member for Peterborough says: “Oh, no. This bill is a bill of substance and body and is going to have significant impact.” I say, then, if that's the case, why is the public going to be allowed two hours to participate in public hearings?

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I understand that the nice thing about being a Liberal is you don't always have to be a Liberal. You can campaign like a New Democrat and govern like a Tory; Canadians have learned that over and over again.

The difficulty that New Democrats and fair-minded people have with this time allocation motion is that it indeed says to the public, this government says to the public, Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals say to the public, “Go pound salt. We have no interest whatsoever in your views on the content of this budget bill, this finance bill.” That's what the government is saying. The government is saying to the people of Ontario, “Go away. Go. Don't bother us. We're here to govern, and we don't need you until we come looking for your votes once again in yet another year's time.” That's McGuinty and the Liberals in a pre-election mode, saying to the public, “Go away. Don't even think of being consulted or participating in a committee process.”

I happen to believe—New Democrats happen to believe; Ms. DiNovo happens to believe—that what happens in this chamber should be of the utmost importance; that for people to say, “Oh, it has been debated enough,” is hardly an argument when the vast majority of members of this place haven't had a chance to speak to the bill yet.

I was fortunate enough to be elected here at a time when there weren't limits on speeches and when time allocation wasn't possible, pursuant to the standing orders. Rather, the government relied upon the common-law rule of closure and prevailed upon the Speaker to invoke closure, and the Speaker would do that only after there had been, in his or her view, substantial debate, inclusive debate, or when, in his or her view, the debate was becoming merely dilatory. At that time, we had a House that didn't sit evenings, denying opposition parties a question period—because that's what sitting evenings is all about, denying opposition parties a question period while seizing a sessional day by the government; that's why they do it—and I say to you, more legislation got passed than has since. It's true.

It's remarkable that the government just doesn't get it, just doesn't understand.

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): We get it.

Mr. Kormos: Oh, you'll get it; I'm sure of that. You'll get everything you deserve.

I say that when government shows such disdain for debate, it's a government that should cause people great concern; it's a government about which people should be asking some pretty serious questions; it's a government that people should start to fear rather than respect.

I remember the first few days of this government. I remember newly elected government members, and I could actually hear them saying, "Oh, my goodness, what are we doing this for? Why don't we just get down to business?" The couple I heard saying that were talking about the debate taking place. They just didn't understand why there would be a debate here in the Legislature, here in the Parliament. A debate? My goodness, how shocking.

I say that the process is very important for a whole pile of reasons. One, it's the job of the opposition to critique government legislation and policy, to expose flaws in government legislation and policy, to question it, to reveal its true content and to take a clear position. Surely it's the responsibility of government members to stand up and let their constituents know why they're supporting a particular bill, as they inevitably do. Otherwise, people are mere voting machines, people are but trained seals—or untrained seals, as the case may be. The government whip is probably in a better position to comment on that.

I find time allocation motions disturbing. I find this one particularly repugnant because it doesn't just shut down the opposition; it shuts down the public.

We're going to vote on this in about 30 minutes' time. So I'm saying this to government members: Today you have handed to you an opportunity to do the right thing; today you have handed to you an opportunity to make it clear to your Premier's Office, to the whip's office, that you're beholden not to the Premier or the whip but to the people who sent you here. I say to government members that today is the opportunity for you to stand up and do the right thing. When opposition members, when Ms. DiNovo and I, joined by our Conservative colleagues,

stand up and oppose this bill, I'm pleading with even just seven government members to stand up in opposition to the resolution as well and to make a difference, to leave a mark, to demonstrate the courage—

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): Free vote.

Mr. Kormos: Mr. Levac says—the same sort of free vote that has been promised by his Premier and leader. Oh, please. We need the Premier to come in here and say that. We need the members of this chamber to show the courage to do it. Actions will speak far louder than words.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Levac: I appreciate the opportunity. Well, the member from Niagara Centre has done it again, the effervescent, bombastic, passionate, dramatic speaker that he is, and he does a good job all the time. But look at the positioning of their idea of what time allocation means in this case. So let's set up the context. I didn't mind being quoted, because those quotes from Hansard are very usable, and I'd like them to be used again, with the context. Let's set the context, in case anyone wants to use them. Both members of the NDP used them. Let's set up the context to see if they accept it and understand—or were they just being selective in their research?

From 1999 to 2003, the Harris-Eves government used time allocation for 67 of the 111 government bills that received royal assent, or 61% of the bills were time-allocated. The Eves government, in its last session, used time allocation 83% of the time on their bills. For 83% of their bills, they used time allocation. Talk about frustration. In eight years, the Tories never had more than three days of second reading debate on a budget bill—never. During the eight years of PC rule, the average third reading debate on a government bill was—get this—less than one sessional day. That was the context of the frustration that both the NDP and the Liberals faced in dealing with the time allocation boogeyman that's being referenced. This government has used it—are you ready?—7% of the time on the bills that are being talked about.

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My goodness gracious. Where is the drama? Where's the bombastic attitude about it? There's the context. Go ahead and keep quoting us about what we went through. You weren't here. But if you had seen what happened—wait a minute; I missed something. Let's talk about the NDP's record on the very thing the member opposite was blowing up about. Let's go. The NDP set a trend for the use of time allocation motions. They used time allocation five times more than the previous Liberal government did under Premier Peterson—five times more. "Oh, but that didn't count. That was yesterday. That doesn't count. Don't look at our record; just look at the one today." And guess what? The member from Niagara Centre is worrying about public hearings. There were no public hearings when the NDP ripped up the collective agreements for the social contract, no time allocated to third reading debate. Bingo, gone. Oh, so the holier-than-thou NDP stands up and says, "A pox on all your houses." Last, but not least, there were no public hearings when the NDP

raised the gas tax 3.4 cents a litre. Not one word from the public was allowed.

My goodness gracious, that's the context. So both the opposition parties can stand up and scream bloody murder all they want; the record speaks for itself.

Mr. Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to join the raucous debate on Bill 151, the Budget Measures Act. I just listened to the member for Brant talk about what he sees as an inconsistency in the other parties for criticizing this government for bringing in time allocation motions. What he fails to point out is that this party here didn't make promises with regard to time allocation, didn't criticize time allocation when in opposition, because they were in government. You see, these guys made a career of screaming and yelling about the use and the implementation of time allocation when the Conservatives were in government. You see, there's the inconsistency. I've never had the opportunity, as a member of government, to invoke time allocation.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: And you never will.

Mr. Yakabuski: I've never had the opportunity, and the Minister of Finance says I never will. What he probably means is that when I am in government I never will. I presume that's what he's meaning. But he's a man who's full of dichotomies and hidden meanings. You know that "mystery wrapped up in an enigma" kind of thing? He's one of those kind of fellows. A charming lad, though, I must say. He may be implying that we're never going to be in government. I don't know about that. I'd be willing to take that bet at some point.

But there's the inconsistency. When you stand on principle, on the opposition side, and rail—and I must say that the number of passages from the gospel according to Liberal opposition members that my friend from Niagara Centre quoted gives me reason to pause and reflect: Do these guys believe a word they say themselves? A single word? Or do they just stand there and make a lot of noise? Do they jump up in righteous indignation when they want to gain some kind of a political advantage and claim that the democratic process is at risk? Because if you're going to stand on principle, then you've got to stand for principles. And when the shoe is on the other foot, you can't throw those principles out the window because now it becomes convenient. The member for Brant must know that. He must know that you just can't toss those principles away because your needs of that particular day mean that you want to be expedient and you want to move on quickly. That's not good enough. That is the concern that New Democrats have articulated and that is the concern that we're articulating as members of Her Majesty's opposition.

Mr. Leal: Loyal opposition.

Mr. Yakabuski: Loyal opposition; thank you very much. The member for Peterborough points out that we are Her Majesty's loyal opposition. "Loyal she began, loyal remains," as the slogan on our coat of arms indicates.

Mr. Leal: You're right, sir.

Mr. Yakabuski: Mr. Speaker, I know they try to throw me off when I'm on to something good, but it just won't work.

What I'm very concerned about is the inconsistency on the part of Liberals. Concerned? I'm very concerned. Surprised? Not a bit. I'm not a bit surprised that the Liberals would say one thing while in opposition, scream to the high heavens about the wrongness of what the government was doing, and when in government do precisely what they condemned while in opposition. Am I surprised by those actions? As I say, and as I will repeat, not a bit; not a bit. So there is the concern that the people of Ontario should have: why this government has such a different view of things now that they're no longer the opposition.

I want to read some of these wonderful quotes. I see the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal here, and I want to read what he had to say. I'm sure he has had some busy days. He's been before the estimates committee, so he's had a heavy schedule these last couple of days. However, I do want to read what he had to say about time allocation, because I'm sure he's here tonight to ensure that this time allocation motion passes. I suppose he's going to be voting for this motion. I want to hear what he had to say about time allocation motions. Hmm. This is Mr. Caplan, now the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal:

"I usually start off my remarks by saying it's a pleasure to speak to something on behalf of the people of Don Valley East, but it really isn't. This is yet another closure motion, a gag order on the Legislature. How could it ever be a pleasure to speak to that, when that's the normal course of action and when this Legislature is shut down for the very purpose it was meant for, which was to discuss important matters? That's what happening here today: people who are going to be watching this on television will see a banner on their screen which says a motion for time allocation—it's closure, plain and simple."

Well, the curtain falls. The curtain falls on democracy, according to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, here in the 38th Parliament. The curtain falls.

I want to just slide a little off, do a lateral motion here for the time being. I want to talk a little bit about constituency week, the week that we just had. I've got to tell you what a great week it was, because constituency week, as you know, coincides with remembrance week. In my riding of 17 municipalities, you can well appreciate how many different communities have their own commemorative ceremonies to honour those who made the ultimate sacrifice for peace, democracy and freedom around the world and here in Canada.

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I had the honour of attending many of these this year. Of course, you can't attend them all, because there just aren't enough days and enough time in those days to get to them all every year. But one thing I've been able to see over the past four years now that I have attended these ceremonies is the poignant, meaningful ceremonies that

are unique to each and every community. I'm sure it is no different for any member of this Legislature. Some have more communities and more celebrations than others, but at every one of these stops you can see the unique sacrifice of each community and the stories of sacrifice that each community has to tell across Ontario and, of course, across Canada. I think that we are privileged as legislators to be able to go to these communities and share some of those stories with them.

The theme this year from Veterans Affairs was "Share the Story." I think it was such an appropriate theme because, as the numbers of our veterans dwindle and become fewer and fewer every year, it's very, very important that those people do share those stories so that they will not be lost generations from now. I know that many veterans find those stories painful to talk about. I know that my own father was very uncomfortable talking about experiences overseas. Perhaps if he had lived longer, he may have reached a point where he would have been more comfortable talking about them to his children and other people—talking to people other than old war buddies. This year's theme, "Share the Story," is something that I hope our great veterans latch on to and support so that those stories of Canada's contribution—tremendous contribution—in times of war will not be forgotten.

I think sometimes we tend to minimize our contributions because we tend to not want to talk about those kinds of things. But the truth is that Canada made a tremendous contribution in conflicts around the world and it's something we should be very proud of, because all of the things we enjoy today, all of the freedoms, all of the privileges, are attributed to those who made those ultimate sacrifices, those who came back to help build a country, and of course those brave men and women who are defending those ideals today in places around the world, particularly in Afghanistan. So I wanted to take that moment to share that with you. As I say, I think we are privileged to be able to participate in those ceremonies, and I want to say thank you to all of those who have contributed to our freedom around the world.

Now, back to the motion, this time allocation motion. The finance minister himself, who, I would suggest, has been—while he may not be the one who tabled this motion, because the House leader would have tabled it, I guess.

Interjection.

Mr. Yakabuski: The deputy House leader tabled it? Yes, the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal is not only the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal; he's the deputy House leader. He's the guy behind it.

Ms. MacLeod: He's behind everything.

Mr. Yakabuski: He's behind it. But don't think for a minute that he and the finance minister haven't communicated about this, because the finance minister doesn't want us talking about the budget measures of this government. The finance minister doesn't want us standing up here and pointing out the inadequacies, the failures, the shenanigans of this government when it

comes to budgets. He doesn't want us talking about that. He doesn't want us talking about things like how a government, in three years, has had spending go up almost \$20 billion, from \$68 billion to \$88 billion. He doesn't want us to talk about that because the people in this province know that that money is only coming from one source: right out of their pockets. That's where it's coming from.

He doesn't want us talking about that, and he doesn't want us talking about the fact that—you know me; I'm an optimist. But there is some concern out there about the prospects for Ontario's economy. He doesn't want us talking about that. He doesn't want us talking about the fact that there are some worried people out there with regard to the prospects on the horizon. They want to talk about 250,000 or 240,000 jobs in the first three years of Liberal rule. Well, I can tell you, in the first three years of the previous government's rule they created 370,000 jobs, and that was their worst three years. In the last three years they created over half a million jobs, and those weren't dominated by public sector jobs, like half of these jobs are—"created by this government." That's what they like to say: "created."

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: Never said it once.

Mr. Yakabuski: The Minister of Finance never said it once. Okay. What word does he use? I don't know, but they like to take credit for it.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: We say that the people created those jobs.

Mr. Yakabuski: Okay. I want to hear that in your next Hansard.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: I want you to say it right now. Repeat after me: The people created those jobs.

Mr. Yakabuski: Then you'd better stop trying to take credit for them.

They don't want us talking about the reality of how this government is taking over \$2,000 more out of an average family's pocket than when they were elected.

You know, I'll never forget the gentleman—I was in a Tim Hortons and he said to me, "John, what are you going to do about that McGuinty?" I said, "Well, I'm going to do my best to hope that we can replace them as government." He said, "John, by the time the election rolls around, the only thing that's going to be left in my pockets is lint." That's what he said to me: lint. "That's what's going to be left in my pockets," he told me, "from this government."

So they don't want us talking about those kinds of things because they want the people of Ontario to think that—you know what?—everything is hunky-dory at Queen's Park. Mr. McGuinty's got everything under control. He's got Greg Sorbara, the finance minister. The guy knows everything.

Mr. Leal: He's doing a great job.

Mr. Yakabuski: Well, that's not the fact. We're looking for an opportunity to debate these kinds of bills and to debate these kinds of measures so that the right information can be disseminated to the people of Ontario so they can make real, informed decisions and so they

can analyze this and say, “Are we on the right track?” You know, this government would like to say it’s on the right track. Well, the track that this government is on—I think, not too far ahead, we’ll see that somebody has forgotten to put down the rails, because this train, this Liberal train, this economic mess that this finance minister is in charge of is about to be derailed. That’s why we need real—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much. Further debate?

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Hon. Mr. Sorbara: I don’t get as many opportunities as I would like to participate in these evening sittings. In fact, I’m here on a Tuesday night, and I think the Legislature has got real problems. I’ve heard two comedians address the very important issue of this budget bill, both of them entertaining within a context. My friend the member from Niagara Centre has been doing that routine for a very long time.

Mr. Leal: Jackie Gleason and Johnny Carson.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: Well, not that good, I say to my friend from Peterborough. I grew up with Jackie Gleason. Jackie Gleason was a really great comedian, and Johnny Carson was one of the great late-night entertainers.

My friend from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke went on a tirade. It was full of—what did Shakespeare say?—sound and fury, signifying nothing. We all know about that, and that’s what we heard from both of them.

I have an opportunity to wrap up this debate on the time allocation motion, and I do it with some pride and some joy. I want to spend a minute responding to my friend from Niagara Centre about time allocation, because he checked Hansard and quoted me on time allocation from back in December 2001. I stand by the remarks that I made at that time. In fact, I have the great honour of being one of the last people to filibuster this Legislature, in 1993, I think it was. My friend from Niagara Centre was here, and the New Democratic Party, under then-House leader Dave Cooke, made the most tremendous transformation of the rules that this Parliament has ever seen, basically unilaterally killing most members’ opportunity to actually—

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: My friend Mr. Kormos says, “Do you remember Bob Rae signing off on that?” I remember coming across the floor to speak to the Premier. At that time, Mr. Rae—I’m not going to get into that part of my speech; I’ll save it for another time—was sitting in this desk right here. I said to him, “Bob, these are draconian changes. You’re cutting off Parliament’s ability to debate and discuss and consider legislation. I know you’re doing it for a good purpose today, but one day you will not be in government. One day perhaps the Conservatives will be in government, and they will abuse those rules,” which they did from 1995 to when we finally threw them out of office in October 2003. So I stand by my own record on time allocation.

This motion is really quite simple. This motion says, “Let’s get this bill from this Parliament into the standing

committee on finance and economic affairs. Let’s give the public and the members an opportunity to consider the various issues in this bill.” What does this bill do? This bill is quite simple. It’s the second bill to enact the measures that were contained in the budget that my colleague, now the Minister of Energy, presented in March. It was a darned good budget; in fact, historically the most significant investment in infrastructure this province has seen in perhaps 50 years. We’re investing significantly, for the first time in decades, in public transportation right across the GTA.

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): And \$32 million for Ottawa.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: My friend Mr. McNeely says, “\$32 million for Ottawa.” All across the province we see roads being built, bridges being built, and new transit systems being put in place because of that budget. This time allocation motion simply says, “Let’s put the final touches on the budget measures, let’s get them implemented and let’s get them in place.”

Surprisingly, we heard today in question period the new member from Nepean–Carleton complaining about the fact, and suggesting erroneously, I say to my friend from Renfrew, that somehow this government was abandoning its commitment to the O-Train in Ottawa. This is fantastic. She succeeds the now federal President of the Treasury Board, the incredible John Baird, who has been trying to sabotage the O-Train, derail the O-Train, ever since he got elected and became part of Mr. Harper’s cabinet. The uproar in this Parliament at that question has rarely been matched in question periods over the course of the last season, or perhaps years.

The budget commits further funds to the O-Train, to Ottawa, and it commits to bridges in your riding and in your riding and in your riding. It sets aside almost \$750 million to get new transit systems in the greater Toronto area under way. Once our friends in the federal government decide to put their name and their signature on the cheque, we’ll be able to get construction of that subway going. Surely to God, it is in the interest of everyone in this Legislature and, I say to them in Ottawa, in that Legislature, that we get on with these projects. That’s what the budget is really all about.

In the closing minutes, there are just a couple of other things that perhaps have not had a lot of ink or powerful spotlights on them. This budget bill, which as a result of this motion will move through the process into committee, will enhance property and sales tax credits for seniors—a very important measure. All of us know, in every one of our ridings, that the situation of seniors on low or fixed incomes is an issue all of us have to take seriously. This budget bill helps seniors out with a further enhancement to the property and sales tax credit. I know that members, when they’re considering it, will want this measure to get passed, and get passed quickly, on behalf of those seniors. Finally, you’ll recall that the first budget of my counterpart, Mr. Flaherty, in Ottawa provided for a universal child care benefit. This budget bill makes sure

that moms and dads with young children get the full financial benefit of that tax credit.

Surely that's a worthy purpose. Surely it's important to get these measures moved forward. Surely it's important to use some discipline with our time, and this time allocation motion simply says, "Let us now wrap up debate in this Legislature, allow our committee to consider the details, and get the bill back here for third reading and passage into law." If we can wrap that up, we will be benefiting every single mom and dad with young kids in Ontario and thousands and thousands of seniors who look to this enhanced benefit as part of the package that they saw in that budget.

With that, I am pleased to wrap up the debate.

Mr. Yakabuski: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would ask unanimous consent that the Minister of Finance get some extra time. We hardly heard a word about Bob Rae; we thought he was going to talk a little more about Bob Rae.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I heard a no.

Mr. Caplan has moved government notice of motion 237. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2119 to 2129.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be counted by the table staff.

Ayes

Bentley, Christopher	Jeffrey, Linda	Sandals, Liz
Bradley, James J.	Kular, Kuldip	Sergio, Mario
Brownell, Jim	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Smith, Monique
Caplan, David	Leal, Jeff	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Levac, Dave	Van Bommel, Maria
Crozier, Bruce	Matthews, Deborah	Wilkinson, John
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dhillon, Vic	Patten, Richard	Zimmer, David
Duguid, Brad	Qaadri, Shafiq	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Racco, Mario G.	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time.

Nays

Barrett, Toby	MacLeod, Lisa	Yakabuski, John
DiNovo, Cheri	Miller, Norm	
Kormos, Peter	O'Toole, John	

The Deputy Clerk (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 28; the nays are 7.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It being 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 2132.

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Norman W. Sterling, Kathleen O.Wynne
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