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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 3 November 1999

Mercredi 3 novembre 1999

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 3 November 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 3 novembre 1999

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CANCER CARE

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I want to address my remarks to the Minister of Health. During the recent Breast Cancer Awareness Day, the minister praised the screening advances made in our province and confirmed that indeed early detection saves lives.

A constituent of mine, Mrs Antonietta Quaglietta, has been on the waiting list to be seen by an oncologist for breast cancer treatment since September 21. She has been told of a waiting period of three to four months, and her doctor is increasingly concerned that his patient has to wait too long for critical radiation treatments. My constituent has already had major surgery twice, in June and July, and has now been presented with the option of going to either Thunder Bay or Buffalo. Five weeks of treatment away from her family business is not an encouraging option.

This clearly shows that women in the same condition as my constituent, detected with breast cancer, are left at the mercy of their fears and worries as the days slip by and turn into weeks and months waiting for treatment. I wonder if this is the way we treat women in Ontario. I ask the minister if this is what the government calls saving lives.

TAKE OUR KIDS TO WORK DAY

Mr David Young (Willowdale): I rise today to recognize national Take Our Kids to Work Day.

Take Our Kids to Work Day was established four years ago in the greater Toronto area by an organization known as the Learning Partnership. Grade 9 students from across the country are encouraged to spend a day at work with a parent, a relative, an adult friend or a volunteer host.

The Learning Partnership is a non-profit, volunteer-driven, professionally staffed organization that was established in 1993. The focus of the Learning Partnership is to develop positive and constructive relationships between education, business and the community.

Take Our Kids to Work Day has experienced phenomenal growth in the last four years. In fact, last year over

300,000 students and 75,000 workplaces took part in the program. This year we anticipate it will be far more successful.

There are three aims of the Take Our Kids to Work Day program: to offer students insight into the working world, to allow students to see their parents at work, and to encourage and emphasize that education goes beyond the classroom.

I can tell you from personal experience that this is a worthwhile program. My daughter Sara is with me here today, which makes this day and the program all the more special to me. I am certain that all participants in the program will be similarly proud and will agree that this is an excellent investment of our time in our children's future.

COURTROOM SECURITY

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): This government pays lip service to cracking down on crime, and yesterday they revealed their flagship policy on crime, a three-page act cracking down on squeegee kids. Some flagship. Some crackdown.

Yet this government cannot even control crime in the very heart of our justice system, the very place where we try criminals—the courtrooms of this province. Judges and police reported last week that breaking into a courtroom is as easy as looting a convertible with the top down. When the sun goes down, the Attorney General takes responsibility for security of our courtrooms, and that's exactly when thieves easily break into courtrooms and judges' offices, stealing highly confidential information about victims of crime.

Last Thursday, after a series of recent break-ins in the courthouses, Judge Derek Hogg, the chief administrative judge, threatened to shut down the courts in Etobicoke until something is done about the mess. If the courts are closed for business, then crime is left unchecked and victims continue to suffer. Judge Hogg has been put in an impossible position: close the courtrooms or leave the courtrooms open to thieves. The Premier's limo has better security than the courtrooms of Ontario.

Judge Hogg has said to this government: "They have been told a thousand times that something bad could happen.... Not just for us, but for the public as well. I don't know why they don't do something about it." I don't know why either, and I look forward to a response from the minister.

ONTARIO RENTAL HOUSING TRIBUNAL

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): The Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal has one mediator to handle landlord and tenant disputes across all of northern Ontario. In November, this mediator, who is located in Sudbury, will be rendered surplus. Northern tenancy issues will then be handled by mediators in eastern and southern Ontario, probably by video or teleconferencing. This arrangement discriminates against northern landlords and tenants because they don't have access to complete mediation services as do people in the east and south.

The problem stems right back to the creation of this tribunal by the Harris government. In the original plan for the organization, there was no mediator position in Sudbury for the north. It was only due to transitional money to get the tribunal operating and the fact that 45 rent officers were surplus that the northern Ontario regional office of the tribunal received a mediator in Sudbury for the short term. Now even this has gone. This situation is unacceptable.

The Harris government has an obligation and an opportunity to fix the mess. Right now, KPMG is completing an operational review of the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I am convinced that KPMG will identify a need for mediators in northern Ontario, both the northeast and the northwest, so that landlords and tenants can access a specific individual personally for mediation services.

The minister must recognize that this service is needed and respond positively by ensuring that those in the north receive the services they need.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): I am proud to stand in the Legislature today to inform the House of a great success story in my riding of London-Fanshawe.

The London Community Small Business Centre was started in 1986 through the generous sponsorship of the city of London, the London Chamber of Commerce, the University of Western Ontario, Fanshawe College and the province of Ontario.

Attached to the small business centre is a program called the small business incubator. The business incubator is designed to meet the special needs of start-up companies, providing flexible space and a wide variety of services on a shared basis, all at an affordable cost to entrepreneurs. There are 24 companies currently housed in the incubator, mostly involved in manufacturing, and 43 companies have successfully passed through the incubation process and graduated into the community.

Later, the small business centre, in partnership with the city of London and the province of Ontario, established a resource centre. The centre has a reference library available to the public covering a wide range of topics for aspiring entrepreneurs and one-on-one counsel-

ling with entrepreneurs in proposed ventures and business plan development.

This government realizes that governments do not create jobs, businesses create jobs. We have worked hard for the last four years to create an economic climate for new entrepreneurs to succeed. I'm proud to have members of my community supporting and encouraging these enterprises.

1340

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): Yesterday, this building was filled with the incredible sound of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. They performed on the steps of the Legislature to raise the profile of the dire circumstances facing these world-class musicians. This concert was enjoyed by members of all three parties and members of the public.

Toronto's cultural industry, which includes music, theatre, film and art, is a major contributor to tourism, taxes and employment. Yet the government of Ontario gives less financial support to cultural institutions as a percentage of their overall budget than any other province in Canada.

Maintaining Toronto's and Ontario's reputation as Canada's cultural centre without a world-class symphony orchestra is simply not possible. This strike by musicians is not about higher wages but is an attempt to wake up the board and our governments to the potential loss of a 76-year-old icon.

All great governments support culture and the arts. It, along with heritage, is vital to the health of any society. Let us not lose this calibre of orchestra because of government complacency and indifference.

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr Bob Wood (London West): I am honoured to inform the House that the Silver Cross Mother who will be laying the wreath in Ottawa this Remembrance Day is a resident of London West, Mrs Loyola Helen Park. She is the mother of Corporal Michael William Simpson, a Canadian peacekeeper who was killed with eight other Canadians by anti-aircraft fire in the Mideast in 1974. This is the first time that a peacekeeper's mother has been so honoured.

Both Mrs Park and her late husband, William James Simpson, were veterans of World War II, Mr Simpson having been a D-Day veteran who served in France, Belgium and Holland. Both Mrs Park's mother-in-law, Ormenta May Simpson, and her maternal grandmother, Elizabeth Snell Tutty, were Silver Cross Mothers.

Corporal Simpson was born and grew up in Toronto, joined the Canadian Army in 1965 and was posted to the Mideast in 1974. He was posthumously awarded the UN service medal.

Mrs Park's family is an outstanding example of people who are prepared to come forward to serve their country

and humankind generally in order to create a better world for all. It is their kind of people who have made this country what it is and who are making the world what it should be.

Corporal Simpson's brother, Jack Simpson, is with us in the gallery today. I ask all members to join with me in recognizing him and his family.

GUELPH OVERPASS

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): Last week, the people of Ontario learned that they are out millions of dollars thanks to the Ministry of Transportation. The headline in the Guelph Mercury says it all: "Overpass Fiasco Costs \$3.2 Million."

Thanks to Tory cuts to MTO's planning and design department and the need now to contract out the work, the ministry made an expensive mistake in its initial plan for the overpass at Highways 6 and 7 in Guelph. Then the ministry entered into a bizarre dispute with its own contractor, which caused delays for months, costing Ontario taxpayers \$3.2 million, with nothing to show for it.

The Minister of Transportation should be ashamed of this blatant incompetence and scandalous mismanagement. This matter went to court and the judge in the case called the actions of his ministry "unconscionable." Here we have our roads and highways in a state of crisis, yet the Mike Harris government just wasted millions of dollars in a shockingly inappropriate dispute, which they lost, and then tried to hide the facts from the public, for it was only when they were forced to reveal the facts that the ministry acknowledged the true costs.

Today I think the minister should stand up and apologize to the people of Guelph and Ontario for the mismanagement, the delays, the extra costs and the blatant attempt to hide the real story from the public, because the public was not well served by this fiasco.

Make no mistake about it: If the ministry tries to handle their foul-ups as they did with the Guelph overpass fiasco, it can happen again, causing countless other delays and pointless disputes, all because of penny-wise but pound-foolish decisions. What a shame.

TAKE OUR KIDS TO WORK DAY

Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek): I rise today to speak on a similar topic already mentioned by my friend from Willowdale.

I wish to inform the House that this is National Career Week. To commemorate this week, the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board and the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board have organized Take Our Kids to Work Day for grade 9 students.

All across Hamilton-Wentworth today, parents and guardians are taking their kids to the office, to the store, to the factory and even to the Legislature to allow the students to see them at work. Seven thousand students will join their parent or guardian at work today.

This day provides our kids with a view of the working world to help give them an understanding of its demands and opportunities. They are expected to tour the workplace, meet with the employees and other participants and gain a better appreciation of their parent or guardian and the work they do to support their family.

At this time, let me introduce my daughter Brienne, who joins us in the east visitors' gallery. I'm proud to report to the House that Brienne has already learned a lot during her first day at Queen's Park. In fact, she wants to actively pursue a change to the standing orders of the Clark household. She would like to have the same powers as you, Mr Speaker, so that every time I begin to lecture her at home, all she has to do is stand up and I have to sit down and shut up.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PETERBOROUGH REGIONAL HEALTH CENTRE ACT, 1999

Mr Stewart moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr3, An Act respecting Peterborough Regional Health Centre.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Pursuant to standing order 86(a), this bill stands referred to the Commissioners of Estate Bills.

TOWNSHIP OF NORTH KAWARTHA ACT, 1999

Mr Stewart moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr8, An Act to change the name of The Corporation of the Township of Burleigh-Anstruther-Chandos to The Corporation of the Township of North Kawartha.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Pursuant to standing order 84(a), this bill stands referred to the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

HARBOURFRONT TRAILER PARK LTD. ACT, 1999

Mr Dunlop moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr1, An Act to revive Harbourfront Trailer Park Ltd.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Pursuant to standing order 84(a), this bill stands referred to the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

STUDENT HEALTH AND SAFETY
PROGRAMS ACT, 1999
LOI DE 1999 SUR LES PROGRAMMES
DE SANTÉ ET DE SÉCURITÉ
POUR ÉTUDIANTS

Mr Gravelle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 10, An Act to bring health and safety programs to Ontario students / Projet de loi 10, Loi visant à offrir des programmes de santé et de sécurité aux étudiants de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

A short explanation, member for Thunder Bay-Superior North.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): As we all know, there are far too many accidents and fatalities in the workplace in the province. My private member's bill addresses this by forming a health and safety educational council made up of members from labour, business, injured workers, students and educators whose role will be to recommend programs in the classroom that will inform all Ontario students of workplace safety issues, hopefully leading to fewer tragedies once they do enter the workforce.

1350

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): I move that, notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following changes be made to the ballot list for private members' public business: Mr Coburn and Mr DeFaria exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr Coburn assumes ballot item 45 and Mr DeFaria assumes ballot item 12; and Mr Conway and Mr Ruprecht exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr Conway assumes ballot item 4 and Mr Ruprecht assumes ballot item 6; and Mr Ramsay and Mr Gravelle exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr Ramsay assumes ballot item 48 and Mr Gravelle assumes ballot item 8; and Ms Di Cocco and Mr Phillips exchange places in order of precedence such that Ms Di Cocco assumes ballot item 68 and Mr Phillips assumes ballot item 9.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Mr Sterling has moved that, notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following changes be made—dispense?

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

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): I seek

unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding the membership of certain standing committees.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The government House leader has requested unanimous consent. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon Mr Sterling: I move that the following amendments be made to the membership of certain committees: Mr Skarica and Mr O'Toole exchange places such that Mr Skarica is on the standing committee on finance and Mr O'Toole is on the standing committee on estimates; Mr Hastings and Mr Coburn exchange places such that Mr Hastings is on the standing committee on public accounts and Mr Coburn is on the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

The Speaker: Mr Sterling has moved that the following amendments be made to the membership of certain committees—dispense?

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

ACCESS TO LEGISLATIVE BUILDING

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: On Monday of this week a member of the third party stood in this House and asked that the Toronto Symphony Orchestra be allowed to play within the precincts of the Legislative Assembly building. Mr Speaker, I believe that you allowed this to happen, although there was an indication by the Toronto Symphony Orchestra that they wanted to undertake a demonstration and hand out pamphlets. That has normally taken place outside the building, and I guess that right has been granted to any group that wants to undertake that.

I understand that yesterday the orchestra was allowed to come into the building. However, they did undertake a demonstration while in the building, which is contrary to the rules we have agreed to in this place.

Mr Speaker, I would like to know what agreement you had from the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, and I would also like to know what your plans would be for allowing this to happen in the future. I believe that the rules which we had should be adhered to, and I was very sorry to see the Toronto Symphony Orchestra break these rules. But I would like to know what the agreement was between you and the orchestra.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): As the members know, it is my position that we should try to keep this House open and give as many opportunities for people to come in. As you know, we've had choirs come in here. There was some concern voiced over this particular.

It was my feeling that I give everybody the benefit of the doubt on the issue. We were very clear, in the forms that are signed by the members coming in here, that there was to be no demonstration. They were clearly aware of that. In light of the circumstances, I made sure it was reaffirmed with them that they were very clear that demonstrations—and that is not only demonstrations but

in situations like this when, as you know, choirs come in to play, it would not be acceptable for any of the choirs to hand out information and solicit commercial business and play.

We were very clear with the Toronto Symphony that they were not allowed to do any demonstrating. I did, however, say in the beginning it is my belief that we should try to keep this House as open, as accessible, as possible. They were very clearly made aware of the rules, and I understand they did not follow those rules. In the future I will have to take that into consideration when a request is made.

I thank the member for his point of order. That is the understanding.

I want to be clear to everybody that we cannot allow any demonstrations as they come in here. They are guests coming in, and we cannot and will not allow any demonstrations to take place. I think all members will be good in that regard, as will the vast majority of the groups that come in. That is the situation. I thank the member for raising that.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I was there throughout the whole proceeding. We did discuss this with you and you did indicate that there should be no political speeches. I passed that on, and there was no political speech made because of the direction you gave. I'm not sure what the government whip has indicated by way of demonstration. I didn't see any demonstration that he's talking about. They played, as we had agreed. There was no distribution of flyers that I was able to see, so I'm not quite sure what, if any, reference was made in that regard. With respect to any demonstration, I didn't see any, so I'd like some clarification from the government whip about what demonstration he's speaking about.

The Speaker: The member will know, as I understand it—and I wasn't there, so I didn't see it—that there was during the performance something written on their shirts, before they played. I didn't see what it actually said.

All I'm saying to all of the members is that I will try to be as accommodating as we can for any group that comes in. As you know, the Toronto Symphony is a world-renowned group. As I said to all members, we will try to work through this but we have to be very clear that any group coming in here cannot participate in a demonstration. That's the situation, as I understand it. I thank all the members for raising their concerns.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): Mr Speaker, I stand today on a point of personal privilege regarding comments made yesterday by the Minister of Education to the member for Parkdale-High Park. I found that the honourable member imputed false motives to members on this side of the House when she said, "I really hope that the Hamilton board doesn't take their political advice from the member opposite, because it's not going to be of assistance to them as they meet with

ministry officials to sort out what they are doing with the increased special education funding they've received from the ministry."

We were elected to represent our constituents, and when my constituents called to let me know that their disabled children were still at home because of lack of resources, I recommended that they approach their trustees. The trustees, in turn, called my office for advice. My advice was then to go to the ministry. When those attempts failed and the board called me back, I then, and only then, recommended that they approach the Liberal critic for education.

I understand that this is part of my responsibilities and felt that yesterday the minister was imputing false motive, that somehow the members on this side of the House were in some sort of unethical collusion with the Hamilton board. That is not the case. As well, I felt her comments were a direct threat to the board and to the parents of these children.

A strong democracy demands a strong opposition. The board is well within its rights to consult with its area MPPs. In fact, they consulted with all of the area MPPs. I, unlike the minister, respect that. I was doing my job in representing my constituents and the Liberal critic for education was doing his job for raising the issue. The minister's comments were far beneath her position. I ask that the honourable minister withdraw her accusations and guarantee that the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board's funding request be given professional and objective attention.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): Mr Speaker, the same as my colleague, I submitted notice to you that I intended to raise this same point of personal privilege in regard to the comments made by the Minister of Education.

Under section 23 of the standing orders, I believe that the minister, Mr Speaker, and I ask you to rule on this, attempted to intimidate the school board with her comments and clearly attempted to intimidate the opposition. Speaker, if you read—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I cannot hear the member's point of order.

1400

Mr Agostino: The minister says, "I really hope that the Hamilton board doesn't take their political advice from the member opposite, because it's not going to be of any assistance to them as they meet with ministry officials." Clearly, a board could read into that that the minister suggests that if they dare speak to the opposition about an issue as important as special needs and children without schools, that may hurt them in their chance to get further assistance. This is clearly intimidation of the House, intimidation of the board, totally improper with the rules of this House, and I ask you to rule on that and rule that the minister has erred in that. She should at least withdraw the comment and apologize both to the school board and to the opposition for clearly a bullying, intimidating tactic to get people to shut up on an important issue such as kids who have special needs, who can't go

to school because this government can't fund them properly.

The Speaker: The member for Parkdale-High Park on the same point of order.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I want to add my objection to the loss of privileges to myself as an individual member of this House and to the House as a whole by the remarks made by the Minister of Education in this House yesterday.

The minister implied directly in her comments that public bodies such as school boards would not do well by dealing with individual members such as myself, acting in the capacity of adding to the well-being of this government. It shows a misreading of this House, of its precedents and of parliamentary democracy to use this House as a platform to make a public pronouncement that the opposition is not a worthy part of the formulation of policy and better government in this province.

It does reflect on a political basis a certain outlook, a certain attitude that we've come to associate with the government, but importantly, it cannot be allowed to stand as a pronouncement of this House by a minister of the crown taking away from the privileges that I'm supposed to be able to exercise on behalf of the residents of Parkdale-High Park and, by inference, the province as a whole as the critic for the loyal opposition for education.

Mr Speaker, I would ask for your consideration of this point for the privileges of myself, the other members who have raised a similar point and for the House as a whole.

The Speaker: The member for Hamilton West on the same point of privilege.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): On the same point of privilege, Mr Speaker: I just want to point out the importance of this given the fact that the trustees in Hamilton have bent over backwards trying to follow all the procedures, follow all of the process the government has offered up in terms of responding to questions the ministry has to resolve the issue. The issue, of course, as my colleague from Hamilton Mountain has mentioned, is about kids, kids who have special needs who were not in school.

The trustees were feeling the pressure from our constituents, and rightly so. Any suggestion that our trustees ought not talk to MPPs who aren't from the government, in effect, takes this whole issue and puts it under a cloud of secrecy, to be judged and juried by government members only, and that is an affront to our democratic way.

So I offer to the Liberal official opposition our support, certainly my support as an NDP member in the Hamilton area, for the point they are raising and overall for the treatment of our board by this government, by the minister. Speaker, I would just ask you to recall the way the minister conducted herself while these points were being raised, laughing and joking once again that none of these things are important. They are important, Speaker. We need you now here to reaffirm our legitimate role in the democratic process.

The Speaker: I thank the members for their notice. However, in the notice of a point of privilege, it also should indicate what the point of privilege is and it did not. In the future, if you could do that. I know all the members referred to standing order 23(i), the standing order regarding if a member imputes false motives to another member.

First of all, it would not have been a point of privilege; it would have been a point of order. It should have been raised at that particular time. It is not a point of order.

I will say this: There has been some escalation. I will be listening very carefully to all members on all sides so that we don't have circumstances like this again. But it is not a point of order.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: On Monday, November 1, the member from Niagara Centre made a response to the Minister of Correctional Services during his statement on Crime Prevention Week. In that response, I believe it was implied that my absence from the House that day—and also imputed motives as well as to why we were not making that statement.

I believe nothing could be further from the truth than that. Certainly, we all support Crime Prevention Week as a vehicle to make sure that the citizens of understand the importance—I was in Bancroft that day. I was at the funeral of police cadet Allan Christiansen, who was tragically killed on his way back from his graduating exercise at the Ontario Police College. This is a great tragedy because this young man had decided to dedicate his life to protecting his community. I would like to convey our condolences from the members of this House to Allan's family and friends, and also to the Police Chief McAlpine and the members of the Durham police. I believe it's appropriate to ask the member to withdraw that imputing of motivation.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): It's remarkable that these statements couldn't have been deferred to later in the week.

I am indeed pleased that the Solicitor General was at this young man's funeral. I wish he could have seen fit to attend the funeral of the murdered police officer as a result of a criminal motor vehicle accident in Niagara some few weeks ago. I withdraw anything that was uncomplimentary or inappropriate.

The Speaker: I thank the member. As all members will also know, they should not be speaking about members' attendance in this House. I thank the members for raising the point of order.

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of privilege today under standing order number 21. I should point out that pursuant to standing order 21(c), I submitted this point of privilege to your office prior to 12:30 today.

At approximately 6:15 last night during the adjournment debate, the member for Hamilton East, Mr Dominic Agostino, attributed a movement on my part to acknowledge agreement or disagreement. I do not feel that the member should have presumed my support for his com-

ments or a condemnation thereof. I would like to put that on the record.

The point comes up because of the peculiar rules of the adjournment debate, or what is sometimes referred to as the late show. Those peculiar rules state in part that no question of privilege or points of order may be raised during the time provided for the late show.

I'd like to first of all say that the Acting Speaker from Algoma-Manitoulin made the correct ruling. I'd also like to say, secondly, that it is not my position that the member for Hamilton East deliberately exploited the peculiar rule.

My points are: My body language was interpreted perhaps falsely, my nod described as "shaking," with no comment as to whether it was assent or dissent. The member for Hamilton East presumes I agreed with the member, without indicating which member. Could it be that he indeed meant the member for Hamilton East, himself? Could it be the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant? Or could it have been the member from York North?

The member for Hamilton East goes on, "Maybe that's the first member" etc and concludes, "Mr Johnson does." I'd like to point out that there are two Mr Barretts referred to in his story and I don't think my body language called for any such conclusion.

The remedy that I'm asking is that the member for Hamilton East consent to deleting the last three sentences in that paragraph on page 316 of the official records of this House.

The Speaker: I thank the member for the point of order and for the point of privilege and for giving me notice. He correctly alluded to it being during the adjournment debate. Nevertheless, I think the member for Perth-Middlesex will know that the member may not correct the record of another member. If any member does want to correct the record, he or she may do that, but is not a point of personal privilege.

1410

VISITOR

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: On a lighter note, I would like to indicate to members of the House that the former member for St Catharines-Brock, Tom Froese, is in the government members' gallery.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): That's not a point of order, and in fact that was my next task. We'll refrain from doing it again, but I thank the member for that.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

WASTE REDUCTION WEEK

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I would

like to invite all members to join me in proclaiming this week, November 1 to 7, as Ontario's 15th annual Waste Reduction Week. I would say parenthetically, I think it was when the member for St Catharines was minister that this week was first proclaimed.

This event, coordinated by the Recycling Council of Ontario, raises awareness on the 3Rs—reduce, reuse and recycle—and encourages all people to reduce waste.

This year's theme is: "Make your R2K resolution. Step lightly into 2000." Our government is leading the challenge with a long-term plan to sustain our waste diversion programs, including the blue box. We will achieve our target, to cut in half the amount of waste sent for disposal.

This morning I joined the RCO at an industry breakfast to share some exciting news: An agreement has been reached by industry, municipalities and the provincial government to help fund municipal blue box and other waste diversion initiatives. I was pleased to sign a memorandum of understanding with our industry and municipal partners, including the Liquor Control Board of Ontario and the Recycling Council of Ontario, to launch Ontario's new Waste Diversion Organization. The organization will begin its work immediately.

The Waste Diversion Organization is based on a one-year voluntary memorandum of understanding. WDO members have committed \$14.5 million to develop, implement and fund municipal waste diversion programs. We asked for and received voluntary participation from a wide range of partners. Industry's resources and expertise, along with those of the municipalities, will help improve existing programs and find more effective ways to reduce and divert waste.

Specifically, the Waste Diversion Organization will establish programs to fund municipal blue box costs related to wine and liquor glass containers to the extent of \$8 million; increase diversion of organic wastes with an investment of as much as \$2 million; establish additional depots for municipal special household wastes—which are sometimes referred to as household hazardous wastes—involving as much as \$1 million; improve the efficiency and effectiveness of blue box programs with funding of as much as \$2 million; and support municipalities in informing the public about waste management activities with \$1 million in free advertising in daily newspapers.

The Waste Diversion Organization's industry partners are drawn from the following sectors: food and consumer products, daily newspapers, paint and coatings and chemical specialties. Other members represent the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Liquor Control Board of Ontario, the Recycling Council of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment. Our ministry's role will be primarily advisory.

I believe that we are laying a solid foundation for waste reduction in Ontario for years to come. I am personally committed to working with the Waste Diversion Organization to ensure that it continues to work well beyond the one-year initiative.

This, for me, is my second high point in Waste Reduction Week. On Monday, with my colleague the Minister of Education, I had the pleasure of joining RCO members and about 250 young people at the Ontario Science Centre to launch the week itself and a new Ontario eco-schools waste reduction recognition program. I hope all honourable members will join me in supporting Waste Reduction Week and participate in the events in their constituencies. Let us all offer our congratulations and appreciation to the RCO and to the hundreds of volunteers working to make Waste Reduction Week a success.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Responses.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I want to join, first of all, in congratulating the Recycling Council of Ontario for the very important role it has played over the years in encouraging waste diversion. We were in circumstances many years ago in many jurisdictions where virtually everything was dumped in what we call a garbage dump or thrown into an incinerator and burned, to a point where we, in the 1980s and 1990s, have looked at and implemented a number of policies to divert a lot of that waste.

The minister will know that I will restrain myself in my applause, knowing that the government members are in fact there to applaud ministers and policies of the government. I will simply say to him—because I want to help him out, as he knows; that's my goal in this House, to help him out—that what is happening here is that the government is attempting to find money to replace the money the government has diverted from municipalities for the support of blue box recycling. You'll remember that municipalities used to get a large quantity of money from the provincial government to assist in meeting those obligations. Now what has happened, because this is waste diversion week, is that the government has diverted something, but it's not waste; it has diverted money.

As you would know, the government collects 10 cents per container at the LCBO and the Beer Store but has snatched this from the municipal recycling program. That's about \$35 million a year that the government has taken away from that program. I want to help the minister get that money back in his ministry, because I know the parsimonious Chair of Management Board, his perhaps rival someday, is a person who may be looking at getting that money for general government revenues. So I want to help the minister get that money back that his government has diverted away from those assistance programs for municipalities.

The minister is here today with his broom. His broom is to sweep the mess created by his Conservative predecessors in terms of waste diversion. I want to tell him that I wish him well in cleaning up that particular mess. I wish him well in securing the necessary funding for the program. I also wish him well in going beyond the voluntary aspect of this. You see, I applaud the people who voluntarily take part in these programs. I think they deserve a lot of credit. But there are a number of people out there who don't volunteer and should be brought into

the grand coalition assisting with this. I know it will be the minister's goal to have those people make their contribution, to have stewardship over the waste they create.

I also want to say that I think there is always a need for continuing education and opportunity in the field of hazardous waste; for municipal hazardous waste to be collected by municipalities, to allow people to be able to find places other than the drain or the garbage in which to place those hazardous wastes.

One of the problems the municipalities have, of course, is that the government of Mike Harris has down-loaded so many additional responsibilities, which present a huge financial obligation in those municipalities, that they have a hard time continuing to operate their waste diversion efforts within those municipalities. For instance, in regional Niagara I know that the regional government now is responsible for \$18 million more, responsibility passed down from the provincial government. It was not a revenue-neutral exercise.

I had hoped that perhaps when the minister rose in the House today he might be giving us an assurance that he was going to now accept and implement the recommendations from the environment groups and conservation groups concerned about the Oak Ridges moraine. If he would like further time, I would be happy to ask for the unanimous consent of the House at the conclusion of my remarks to give the minister a further opportunity to say that he's going to implement the fine recommendations of the conservation groups in the Oak Ridges moraine. I think he would probably want to do that; if he does, I'll be happy to accommodate him in that regard.

I also wish the minister well in getting back some of the staff and investment in the Ministry of the Environment that he has lost. The member for Hamilton East, the former Liberal critic, tells me that about 40% of the staff has been eliminated in the ministry—some of that is going to be in the waste division—and about 45% of the budget has disappeared from your ministry.

We on this side want to help out the minister. We're here to try to assist him in securing those items for his ministry, and I certainly hope he is successful in that effort. I can assure you that he will have our support.

1420

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): We're indeed in a charitable mood today, because I too want to help the Minister of the Environment. First of all I want to help him make clear what his announcement is really all about. Since his government has essentially abandoned recycling, he has to go out and cobble together one-year funding, otherwise the recycling programs we have in this province will begin to fall apart. What he is really announcing here today is that he managed to go out and cobble together funding to cover one year. It will not be completely adequate to the task, it will not provide all the funding that is necessary, but he has, as a stop-gap measure to cover up the chaos and destruction his government has created, managed to cobble together one year's funding. I hope he's able to do

much more than that, otherwise the sins of his government, in terms of neglecting this aspect of the environment, will be all too clear to everyone across the province.

I also want to help the minister with some other things. I was hoping that the minister was going to get on his feet today and apologize for writing a letter to the Uxbridge municipal council, essentially trying to tell Uxbridge and Durham region that they should abandon their concern about the Oak Ridges moraine, that they should side with the minister's developer friends and that they should ignore the environmental assessment that was done in 1996 and in 1997. I was hoping he was going to get to his feet and apologize for that completely inappropriate letter, for that completely inappropriate conduct.

I was also hoping that he was going to get to his feet today and announce that he had seen the light, that the government had seen the light, and was going to impose a development freeze on the Oak Ridges moraine. We were disappointed, but I want the minister to know that we're going to continue to help him along in that direction, because he knows, and I suspect many other members of the government know, that's what they should do.

Finally, I was hoping the minister would get on his feet today and announce that the government is going to hold a commission of inquiry into the relationship between the private interests of developers on the Oak Ridges moraine and his government's handling of land-use planning and environmental protection, or lack of environmental protection, on the Oak Ridges moraine. That too needs to be done, and we're going to do all we can in the Legislature to help the minister get to that position.

Again, we want to say that we'll do all we can to help the minister, but he's got an awful long way to go from the announcement he made here today.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): I too want to congratulate the Recycling Council of Ontario and all those who have been involved for many years in Waste Reduction Week and the ongoing tons and mountains of volunteers out there, as big as our mountains of garbage, trying to improve our 3-R system in Ontario.

I do want to say to the minister that he has in the past cut funding to municipalities for recycling, and the minister knows that. This is a stop-gap measure; it isn't going to resolve the problem.

The other thing I was hoping the minister would speak about today was that he would give us his opinion on the proposal that's been brought to Toronto city council today to move towards a wet-dry system, which I believe has been very successful in Guelph. In fact it saves millions of dollars, creates more jobs and is easier for people to do. I would like to know his position on that.

The other issue is incineration. As you know, when we were in government we banned incineration as an option for garbage disposal. Your government brought it back.

We now have controversy in some communities where a referendum showed that the majority of people do not want incineration as an option, yet the government and municipalities continue to allow that option at a time when we need to be improving the three Rs, not bringing in more pollution. Even with the latest, state-of-the-art technology, burning garbage creates air pollution. As everybody knows, we have a bad air pollution problem in Ontario.

I hope as well that the minister will take a look at that policy and reverse it once again.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): My question is to the Minister of the Environment and Municipal Affairs. Earlier this month, your colleague Mr Gilchrist resigned from cabinet as a result of a police investigation into allegations that government policy was for sale for the price of \$25,000. You, sir, wrote a letter clearly attempting to influence a decision of the Ontario Municipal Board on behalf of developers with clear financial ties to your party. In fact, Jay-M Holdings contributed over \$15,000 to your party.

Minister, you're aware that a number of other developers have a great interest in the Oak Ridges moraine and they too have a great potential to gain from your involvement. To what extent was your interference prompted by financial contributions to your party and to what extent are you prepared to stand up today and put a freeze on the Oak Ridges moraine to ensure that proper development takes place over time?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the honourable member for the question and would say to him, as I said in this House last week as well, that the letter he makes reference to was not a letter to the OMB; it was not a letter to any member of the OMB. It was a letter to the regional chair. It did not take a position on the issue before the OMB. It took a position defending a piece of legislation over which I have carriage. It was advising him of the letter of the law and in no way was it an attempt to in any way influence a quasi-judicial tribunal. It was not even written about an issue that the tribunal had carriage of. So I disagree with his characterization.

In terms of who gave what to whom, I know that all political parties receive donations from individuals. I'm aware that our party has been the most successful at that because we have the best record for the people of Ontario, but it had no impact on my decision to write a letter or not to write a letter.

Mr Duncan: According to a report prepared by noted York University professor Robert MacDermid, 28 companies with links to the Cortellucci and Monte-

marano Development Group made 209 contributions to your party, totalling \$335,000, between 1995 and 1997. That same group of companies made no contributions to this political party.

One of those companies, is Fernbrook Homes Ltd. Let me read to you an ad about Fernbrook Homes, and I quote this from their ad which is readily available on the Internet: "Now previewing, a private, gated community overlooking ... the Oak Ridges moraine."

Can you confirm that this is the same Fernbrook Homes Ltd which is tied to the Cortellucci and Montemarano group of companies who made 209 contributions to your party totalling \$335,000?

Hon Mr Clement: The honourable member knows more about the contribution records of individuals or companies in Ontario than I do. Certainly it had no impact on my decision, because this is the first I've ever heard of it.

Mr Duncan: Let's talk about the principles then, Minister, because principles seem to be lacking over there. A developer has an interest in the moraine. It gives more than \$335,000 to the Tories, and guess what happens. The Minister of the Environment goes to bat for greater development in the moraine, as evidenced by his letter with respect to the Jay-M development. That's the bottom line, isn't it, Minister? They helped you, now we help them. This is not only an issue of your letter; this is a matter of public policy being for sale. Moreover, it's a matter of the public interest being for sale.

Minister, isn't that what's going on here? Aren't you prepared to sell out the public interest for your friends in the development industry?

1430

Hon Mr Clement: I guess the answer to the question is no. That is a complete mischaracterization of the intention of this government, which is to protect the public interest. That is what we were elected to do; that is our carriage day in and day out. I can only say to the honourable member that the accusations he is enunciating are news to me. Our goal is to ensure that public policy is maintained on the moraine or anywhere in Ontario.

I would say that our record is that we have prosperity in Ontario. We have had jobs and opportunity in Ontario for the first time, over the last five years, compared to 10 years previous to that. It's because we have this prosperity that we have development going on, but we always have to balance that with environmental interests and the interests of the public. But the fact is, that kind of balancing never occurred before we got elected simply because the economy stopped before we got elected and we were the ones who had to restart it. Those are the challenges we face as a government and we are up to that challenge.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): New question.

Mr Duncan: My second question is also to the Minister of the Environment. Let's agree that certain people are prospering under this government, there's no question.

Let's review the facts, Minister: Mr Gilchrist has resigned from cabinet. The police are investigating allegations from developers who say they were told that if they wanted the government's help, they had to cough up at least \$25,000. You wrote a letter clearly attempting to influence a decision of the Ontario Municipal Board on behalf of developers with clear financial ties to your party. Your party has received hundreds of thousands of dollars from the Cortellucci and Montemarano group of companies, who it appears have an interest in the moraine.

The message is clear: Your friends are the people who give you money and you reward your friends. Isn't that the way you're doing business, and wouldn't you agree that's not a proper way of doing business in Ontario?

Hon Mr Clement: In answer to his questions, no and yes.

Again I want to correct the honourable member's message and say that my letter was not to the OMB, it was not on an issue that's before the OMB. I wish to correct the record on that point.

If the honourable member has evidence that there is something untoward that has happened, evidence that he wishes to share, I encourage him to share it inside this House and I encourage him to make the allegations outside the House, since he is making allegations against individuals whose character he is impugning. If he feels so strongly about it, perhaps, if he is not protected by parliamentary immunity, he can make those allegations outside this House.

Mr Duncan: Professor MacDermid found that companies linked to this same group donated over \$335,000 between 1995 and 1997. We have uncovered an additional \$43,000 worth of contributions in 1998. While no one knows yet how many tens of thousands of dollars were given during the election, we do know this: The Premier is going back for more. Tonight, this very evening, Premier Harris is attending another fundraiser. This one is for \$400 a plate. Guess who's hosting it. None other than Cortellucci and Montemarano.

Minister, in addition to the hosts of tonight's gala fundraiser, how many other developers with an interest in the moraine will be attending with the Premier this evening?

Hon Mr Clement: To the best of my knowledge, the event this evening is sponsored by the PC Ontario fund, so I wish to correct the record there.

There is no evidence he has presented before me that draws a connection between his allegation and anything that is untoward in terms of public policy. I would say to the honourable member that clearly he deems it to be a necessity that his leader surprise a leadership challenge later on this month, and we all know what necessity is the mother of.

Mr Duncan: A pattern is emerging here, and even though the minister is not able to and the members opposite are, we can certainly connect the dots. This government rewards its friends, and its friends are the people who give the Conservative Party thousands—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Stop the clock. Order. Start the clock.

Mr Duncan: I would call it a web, a web of arrogance, a web of corruption.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Take your seat. Stop the clock. Start the clock.

Mr Duncan: This government rewards its friends, and its friends are the people who give to the Conservative Party. It appears as though this group of companies are advertising and looking into further development in the moraine. We know they've given \$378,000 to the Tory party. In addition to influence, we also find appointments. There's more: In the summer of 1998, Mario Cortellucci was appointed by this government to the York Region Police Services Board. Isn't that the way it works, Minister? If you pay, you'll have a say, whether it's on the development of environmentally sensitive land or the provision of police services. Will you agree today to freeze development on the Oak Ridges moraine?

Hon Mr Clement: Again, there is a whole bunch of allegations there. If he wants to follow it up with some hard evidence, that will be helpful to this House, because all there is before us is a lot of sound and fury. It signifies nothing. We have allegation heaped upon allegation. If he feels so strongly about it, say it outside the House.

With respect to the moraine, I would only say that this government is looking at a whole host of possibilities. To have a freeze without a policy in place I don't think is the right way to go. I think our obligation is to come up with a coherent policy. We inherited no policy from the previous two governments on this issue. We are developing a policy, and we will come up with a policy that not only ensures prosperity in Ontario but ensures the balance of that prosperity with ecological soundness as well. That is the challenge we face. They never had to face that because there was no economic growth at the end of their term.

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, we thought it impossible for your government to create more chaos than you created at the Family Responsibility Office, but in fact that's exactly what you're doing at the disability support office.

My specific question is about the sad state of affairs at the disability adjudication unit. As you know, someone who is disabled, after they've jumped through all the other hoops you've created, has to apply to the disability adjudication unit. They get sent an application package. They fill that out, they send it in. If they're lucky, they get a letter from you telling them that in four to six weeks at the earliest, perhaps six to eight weeks, it will be adjudicated. But when we follow up on applications, we're being told by the disability adjudication unit that

they're just now working on July's applications—a four- or five-month delay.

Minister, why are you telling disabled people something that isn't true?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Meeting the needs of people with disabilities is an important priority for this government. That's why we've set up the Ontario disability support plan. With more than 200,000 people on ODSP across the province, we're working our very best to try to improve services, provide a whole range of employment supports to try to get rid of the label of "permanently unemployable" and to provide the supports for people in their communities.

When I was first elected as a member of provincial Parliament in this place, people had to wait up to two years for adjudication. Those of us on this side of the House thought that was unacceptable and we set out to change that. Our goal is to have cases adjudicated within six to eight weeks, and I'm pleased to say that we've got that caseload down to an average of eight weeks. We've made some solid progress. Can we do a better job? You bet. We continue to work on customer service.

1440

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary.

Mr Christopherson: Minister, you ought to be very concerned, because if you check the Hansards, you're going to find that your answer sounded an awful lot like the former Attorney General when he was dealing with FSP. We know what a boondoggle that was.

My office is swamped with cases. Jim Knox can only stand for about 10 minutes at a time—

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I think I heard the leader of the opposition say that the Minister of Community and Social Services had said something that wasn't true. I would ask the honourable member to please withdraw that comment. I don't think it is an accurate reflection of the facts.

The Speaker: I was listening carefully. I did not hear that, but if the member of the third party wants to withdraw it, he may. I did not hear that, but I will be listening. I caution all members, I'm going to be listening very carefully to what is said. I will sometimes occasionally miss things, but I'm going to listen very carefully.

Member for Hamilton West.

Mr Christopherson: As I was saying, Jim Knox can only stand for about 10 minutes at a time. He can't get physiotherapy because he just hasn't got the money to pay for it. He sent his application in May. In August, he had heard nothing from the ODSP. They told our staff it would take a few weeks. They told us the same thing in September. In October, they told us it would take another two to three weeks.

William MacDonald was diagnosed with a degenerative disc disease. He applied in May 1998; never heard a thing. We contacted the ODSP in July and were told they couldn't find his application. He couriered them another

application. Is a year and a half a reasonable waiting time?

Another constituent has schizophrenia. He sent in his application in February 1998. He couldn't get answers to his questions. He was told it was never received.

Minister, how long are disabled persons in this province expected to wait for entitlements that you have already acknowledged they're entitled to?

Hon Mr Baird: We're setting about to try to improve the system for disabled people in the province. The Ontario disability support plan has been an important part of that process. I think the transformation from the old way with which we did things to the new way has been a good one.

Can we do a better job than up to two years to adjudicate decisions to people with disabilities? You bet. That's why our adjudication process will be ensuring that, on average, we can adjudicate claims within six to eight weeks. That is significantly better than two years.

We continue to work with people with disabilities to try to improve the system so that we can do the best job we can for people with disabilities in Ontario.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): Minister, you don't know what you're talking about. We are dealing with cases from July. Stop the platitudes and listen to the problem.

Your government promised these people they would have an answer within eight weeks. We've had cases where applications sat unopened at the adjudication unit because staff and the local ODSP and Ontario Works office were never told to refer pending files to Toronto. We have cases where people go without medication for months because of adjudication unit delays. The fact is that disabled people are slipping through the cracks because of your mismanagement of the transition to ODSP. There aren't enough staff and the system just isn't in place to do what it's supposed to do. As a result, files are misplaced and applications are lost.

Minister, you made a promise to disabled people, which we supported in good faith. You've let those people down. You've broken that promise. When will you show some leadership and clean up this mess?

Hon Mr Baird: I don't believe it will come as any surprise to the member opposite that I don't fully share her characterization of this process.

We are trying to ensure that we can adjudicate claims for those who are applying for the Ontario disability support plan in an expeditious fashion. It used to take more than two years and I thought that was unacceptable. I believe we can do better. That's why we've put a system in place to try to better make these adjudications to ensure that people can get a timely response.

While that adjudication process goes on, people with disabilities can receive emergency assistance through Ontario Works in that interim period.

I know we can do better than the up to two years when the members opposite were in government. We continue to work to try to improve the system. As of the end of

October we got the average case time down from up to two years to eight weeks. That's a tremendous improvement and we're going to continue to work hard to make it even better.

SPORTS FACILITY TAXATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My next question is for the Minister of Finance. It's pretty clear that your government doesn't have time for the disabled. I now want to ask why you have so much time for NHL millionaires. Your decision to provide tax breaks for NHL millionaires enjoys no support across this province. The Liberal leader and the Liberal caucus may support it, but it is not an acceptable issue anywhere else in Ontario.

You don't have money for schools; you're closing schools. You don't have money to support disabled people and ensure that they can get by in life. You don't have money for daycare spaces. You don't have money for a northern health travel grant system. You don't have money for supportive housing. Yet you've got money for NHL millionaires.

Minister, I want to put a proposition to you. If you think that your decision is supported, then let's go out there and hold public hearings across the province and let us see how much support there is—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Minister of Finance.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): First of all, the leader of the third party obviously doesn't understand what the announcement last Thursday was about. The announcement was all about allowing individual municipalities to choose—

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): It's one taxpayer, Ernie.

Hon Mr Eves: Just a minute—to choose whether or not they want to charge a full commercial rate on sporting facilities owned by private enterprise that are competing with municipally owned sporting facilities that pay no taxes. That's the first point that the leader doesn't seem to understand. I don't know what he has against municipal decision-making and autonomy, but it's entirely up to them to decide what's best for their community and their facilities in their community.

Second, he's assuming that whatever option the municipality chooses, if they choose one, they're not going to get the money back from other commercial and industrial taxpayers in those classes. They can. That's their decision.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Supplementary.

Mr Hampton: The minister's problem is that we understand all too well. This means a tax break for millionaire NHL operators at the municipal level, and then you're going to match it through the education portion at the provincial level. What this means is that your government doesn't have money to support disabled people, you don't have money for affordable housing,

you don't have money to protect the environment but, by God, when a couple of NHL millionaires come to the table, you have no problem at all, the money's right there.

Minister, I put to you this simple request: If you think the people of Ontario believe this is a good idea, then let's hold public hearings across the province. You can go and say to people why you believe it's a good idea. The Liberals tell people why they think it's a good idea. We're going to be there asking why there isn't money for health care, why there isn't money for education, why there isn't money for the disabled but there's money for NHL millionaires.

Will you hold those public hearings and give the people of Ontario a say?

1450

Hon Mr Eves: The leader of the third party might want to ask himself why he and his party supported tax-free status for the interim casino in Windsor, Ontario: So 90% of their clientele could come from Detroit and gamble tax-free. That was your idea of a subsidy. That was your idea about supporting people in different endeavours; they're not even Ontarians to start with.

It is entirely up to a local municipality whether they want to put their sport franchises and facilities on a level playing field with those that they're competing with elsewhere within Ontario, within Canada or within North America. If the leader of the third party has something against municipal autonomy, doesn't think that Toronto is big enough or intelligent enough or informed enough to make that decision, or Ottawa isn't, all they have to do is stand up and say so.

ONTARIO REALTY CORP

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Chair of Management Board. We are now on the eve of another scandal linked to your government. This involves the Ontario Realty Corp, involves a high-profile Tory fundraiser, Mr Jeffery Lyons, and the CEO of the Ontario Realty Corp, Mr Tony Miele.

We know that Mr Miele is a long-time supporter of yours and appointed by you to the Ontario Realty Corp. It involves the sale of the property the government owns at Jarvis and Wellesley.

John Berman, the president of Cityscape Development, has said in court documents and made clear allegations of bid-rigging against the Ontario Realty Corp, Mr Miele and Mr Lyons. He says, and I quote, that the overturning of this deal "reflects political corruption on the absolute highest level." Mr Lyons, your friend, your fundraiser, alleges in court documents as well that he agrees that there is corruption, only that it involves employees of the Ontario Realty Corp, not Mr Miele. These are very serious allegations, not made by the opposition, not made by the media, but made by two key proponents.

In view of all this, will you today call for a police investigation of the Ontario Realty Corp and its dealings with Keg property at Jarvis and Wellesley?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I think the member of the opposition is aware that this matter is before the courts and he's also aware that I can't talk about the specifics. I can tell you one thing, though: There was no agreement of purchase and sale. Some of the allegations you are making are totally false.

In terms of Jeff Lyons, I think all members of this House and most of the public realize that people of all political stripes get involved in the political process. Some volunteer to do door-knocking, others put up signs, others donate money. So the question isn't whether Jeff Lyons contributed to my riding or to the PC Party. The question is, did he get preferential treatment because of his involvement in the process with my office? The answer to that is no. That has been pointed out in newspaper articles and that has been pointed out in the research you've done as well. I'm sure you're aware of that.

Mr Agostino: I'm sure the minister is aware that what is before the courts is a civil suit, not a criminal matter, and he has no authority to deal with a criminal matter.

These allegations are not made by the opposition. Let me go back. They're made in court documents filed both by the proponents on one side, that the deal and acceptance of the deal was overturned. They were made in reply to a Mr Lyons in those same court proceedings. It is not the opposition raising this out of the blue. These are folks involved in the deal and it involves the Ontario Realty Corp at a time when that corporation is involved in some of the most massive land sales in the history of this province.

The integrity of your government and the integrity of the Ontario Realty Corp are at stake here. The integrity of the tendering and bidding process for all Ontarians and for all corporations is at stake here.

We know who the players are: Mr Lyons, well connected to your party; Mr Miele, appointed by you to the Realty Corp. Very clearly, we don't know if anything wrong has been done here, but we know that both parties, in these court documents, have alleged bid-rigging and corruption at the Ontario Realty Corp.

It falls under your jurisdiction. You have responsibility to find out if it went on. If you're not willing to do that, as you seem to be satisfied with its operation, will you today again lift this cloud that's over the Ontario Realty Corp and call for an OPP investigation into this deal, and into the allegations made by Mr Lyons and by a proponent on the other side of bid-rigging and corruption at the Ontario Realty Corp?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I just want to point out that I know the member from Hamilton East and he has far too much intelligence and too much integrity to—I just want to correct the record on his accusation that I hired Tony Miele. He knows full well, and everyone in this House that's involved knows—the government knows it—that

the Ontario Realty Corp has a board of directors. They had a search and they hired Tony Miele to be the president of that corporation. The reason they hired him was because of his qualifications. He worked for the federal government on the Canada Lands Corp in charge of all eastern Ontario sales programs. He is immensely qualified for that job and the member knows that his accusation is false and it's got a separate board.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, recently there has been much talk in the media about maximum rent and its effect on tenants in this province. It seems to me that maximum rent was unfair when it was introduced by the Liberals in 1986 and it is unfair today. Under this provision, landlords are allowed to bank rent increases over several years and then hit tenants with huge rent increases all at once.

Let me quote David Cooke of the NDP from Hansard way back in 1990: "As of 31 March 1990, 323,000 tenant families in Ontario have been hit by rent increases above the government's guidelines." I am going to read through the following examples: 44 Dunfield Avenue, 44%; 100 Gamble Avenue in East York, 23%; 150 Cosburn in East York, 27%; 4918 Bathurst Street in North York, 29%; 147 and 175 Barrington Avenue in East York, 29%.

Minister, maximum rent obviously didn't work then and it doesn't work now. What are you going to do to abolish this terrible, ill-conceived pandering to landlords?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the honourable member for his question. There has been much confusion about this topic and I can understand why, because different people have different points of view and it depends on who you listen to.

For instance, the member for Parkdale-High Park, while calling on our government to fix their mess, says maximum rent is "a legal stickup," and that "there is no possible excuse to attack these families."

Although he is right that there is no excuse, I find it ironic that it is Liberal legislation that is causing the hardship in the first place. In the typical flip-flop fashion of the Liberals, I would like to remind the honourable member that Phil Dewan, who is Dalton McGuinty's chief of staff, has stated: "Eliminating maximum rent harms both landlords and tenants."

He goes on to say: "What are the consequences of preserving legal maximum rent? Simply to maintain the framework which has functioned for the last 10 years. There is no evidence of widespread problems resulting from the concept of maximum legal rents during the past decade, nor will there be in the next."

It is clear the Liberals don't care about tenants and that is why it has been up to this government to fix their mess.

Mr Newman: My supplementary question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing again. This afternoon before the House there will be a motion debat-

ed by one of the opposition members calling on this government to, among other things, "stop its attack on affordable housing and tenants."

Minister, I can't wait until later this afternoon so I'm going to ask you now: When are you going to stop this so-called attack on affordable housing and tenants?

Hon Mr Clement: I thank the honourable member again, and I'll answer it in this way. Again, there has been a lot of misconceptions out there. There are a lot of people talking about this issue. Mr Dewan, as I mentioned, is also quoted as saying: "The fact is, rental housing is a non-issue. Tenants across Ontario have more choice than ever and rents are static, that is, competitive."

He goes on to say: "The Conservative government has not removed rent controls. Though some Liberal Party literature took this line of attack, they should have recognized their own vulnerability. The 1986 Liberal legislation placed no limit on increases for sitting tenants as a result of capital improvements."

He goes on to say: "The question to be put to successful Liberal candidate Mike Bryant, who spread this line during the campaign, is simple: 'Were you ignorant of the facts or did you purposely distort them?'" Those are Mr Dewan's words.

On our side of the House I can say with pride that this government knows where it stands when it comes to caring for tenants and we have acted. As of June 17, 1998, we have frozen maximum rent and started phasing it out. We have provided the private sector with incentives to build and we are finally seeing a return on the cranes that were extinct for this province for so long.

1500

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question for the Minister of the Environment and Municipal Affairs and Housing. It's regarding the Oak Ridges moraine and his letter on behalf of developers who wanted to see development take place on the Oak Ridges moraine.

I'd like to ask the minister if, in addition to the letter that he was copied—he was cc'd a letter and as a result of that he said he took action and wrote his own letter to the chair of the region of Durham. In addition to that, did the minister ever engage in a telephone conversation with any developer interested in the Oak Ridges moraine or any representative of any developer in the Oak Ridges moraine?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Not to the best of my recollection, unless you want to refresh my memory.

Mr Bradley: I'll try to help the member's memory along. He is quoted in NOW Magazine, which is a Reform-minded Toronto weekly, as you would know, as saying the following: "Enter Environment Minister Clement who tells NOW he was called by Tanenbaum's people: 'The pitch to me was there were plans for the

Toronto Symphony Orchestra to have a pastoral site,' says Clement. 'I'm not an expert, but as a way to foster the arts it seems like a great plan.'"

There's an indication from this article that indeed you were called by Tanenbaum's people, by his representatives, to discuss this matter.

Now that I've refreshed your memory, or perhaps you want to deny this, one of the two—I'll accept either—could you tell us what transpired in that conversation, and did it influence you in any way to send a letter on behalf of the developer in the Oak Ridges moraine?

Hon Mr Clement: I guess it was the preamble that led me astray, and I apologize if I got him round a wrong angle.

In fact I did have a conversation with the lawyer about the pipe, not about the development. In the course of that conversation, the TSO proposal did come up, and I indicated to him that I could not take a position on the development, but I was in a position to protect my legislation. I guess you saw an iteration of that or an interpretation of that in NOW Magazine.

FAINT HOPE CLAUSE

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): My question is to the Attorney General. I understand that section 745 of the Criminal Code, which falls under federal Liberal government jurisdiction, allows convicted murderers who have been sentenced up to 25 years in prison with no parole to apply for parole after serving only 15 years. This section I've come to know as the faint hope clause. I'm sure the House can appreciate my shock and amazement that a convicted murderer, who has been sentenced to life in prison with no parole, is allowed to apply for release after only 15 years. I would ask the Attorney General, does this clause really exist?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I thank the member for London-Fanshawe for the question. The member is correct, the faint hope clause does exist, and convicted murderers can be released after serving only 15 years of a 25-year sentence, a sentence which states "25 years without parole."

The federal government just doesn't understand the concerns the people of Ontario have about crime. For the last four years, the federal government has ignored Ontario's pleas to hold criminals, particularly young offenders, accountable for their crimes. Ottawa hasn't gone far enough to support victims of crime. Ontario has repeatedly asked the federal government to restore truth in sentencing and repeal section 745 of the Criminal Code, known as the faint hope clause. Under section 745 of the federal Criminal Code, convicted murderers sentenced to imprisonment without parole for 25 years can seek parole eligibility after only 15 years.

Mr Mazzilli: I would ask the Attorney General to describe to the Legislature what action our provincial government has taken on behalf of victims of crime and the people of Ontario to address the effects that section

745 and the faint hope clause have on victims and families in Ontario.

Hon Mr Flaherty: We responded to Ottawa's failure to reform the Criminal Code by announcing on October 4, 1999, that Ontario is the first province to establish a special fund to help family members of murder victims attend federal hearings reviewing killers' applications for early parole. This year's budget for the section 745 fund is \$100,000. Each family of a murder victim is eligible to receive up to \$5,000 towards expenses incurred in travelling to these section 745 hearings. The fund is the latest in the Ontario government's actions to improve victim services and to ensure victims receive the support and the respect they need and deserve.

MINE CLOSURE

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. As you know, the Royal Oak mine in Timmins was closed in September due to the bankruptcy of its parent company. This has resulted in the loss of about 300 well-paying jobs in Timmins. You will also know that there are two offers before the receiver, Price Waterhouse, to purchase this mine: one from a company called Kinross, which has an offer to purchase the mine in a closed-down state—no jobs—and who are currently trying to secure concessions from your government on environmental closure liabilities. The second offer is from a group of local investors who want to reopen the mine and rehire many of the laid-off workers.

My question to you is: Whoever buys this mine is going to need to come through your government to get operating permits and also to address the requirements of environmental closure plans. Will you commit to only deal with those people who are prepared to purchase that mine, reopen it and put the workers back to work?

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I thank the member for his question. We have had the opportunity to discuss this issue personally on a couple of occasions, and I anticipate we will in the future. To inform members of the House, unfortunately Royal Oak's properties did go into receivership some time ago, and a process has been in place since then and the properties have reverted to the receiver, PricewaterhouseCoopers. My understanding is that the receiver is currently in negotiation with one company, Kinross. I understand from media clippings and from the member that another offer has been put on the table, but the question does rest with the receiver. They're currently in negotiations.

I've had the opportunity to speak as well with Mayor Power of Timmins, who has a different perspective on what he sees as the best route for long-term investment in the Timmins area, to make sure that far into the future there will be jobs in the mining sector in Timmins. I appreciate the member's advice but, as I said, it lies with the receiver at this time.

Mr Bisson: Minister, there ain't no jobs because the mine is closed down, and Kinross has no intention of reopening it. That is the public record. There is a group of investors who are prepared to buy the mine at a fair price, compared to Kinross, and to put it back into production. The ball is in your court. They have to come to your ministry, to your government, to get all the operating plans and to deal with the environmental closure liabilities. Under the law, that is the responsibility you have to deal with.

So my question to you is: It's not up to Price Waterhouse, it's up to you. I want you to work with our community to make sure that whoever ends up buying this mine is committed to reopening it and rehiring the workers who were laid off. Will you commit to that?

Hon Mr Hudak: Again in response, I understand the receiver is in negotiations with at least one offer that is on the table. It remains to be seen how those negotiations progress. I appreciate the member's advice. Mayor Power of Timmins spoke with me recently as well, on his thoughts with respect to the Kinross offer, which he sees has good potential for long-term investment. I appreciate that the member has some opposite advice. As I said, the receiver is making the decisions.

The ministry's commitment to the Timmins area is very strong. There has been some very good news lately in terms of exploration of the Timmins area. I was very pleased to be in Timmins as recently as a week and a half or two weeks ago to announce a \$5-million investment from the northern Ontario heritage fund through the Mike Harris government for the gold mine tour and for the Shania Twain exhibit. That means more jobs in the Timmins area and more tourism in the Timmins area, and that demonstrates this government's commitment to northern Ontario and the Timmins area.

ONTARIO REALTY CORP

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Chair of Management Board. It has to do with the Ontario Realty Corp, which as he knows is a huge operation. He has responsibility for this on behalf of the public. The board of directors is "subject to direction from the Chair of Management Board." I understand from media reports that you said, "There was never an allegation of corruption made to me or any of my staff."

My question to you: Is it correct that over the last year and a half there was never an allegation of corruption at the Ontario Realty Corp made either to you or to any of your staff?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): The question they're referring to is a specific item around the process involving what is referred to as the Keg mansion. There was a series of articles in the spring and there were some articles written by Mr Barber of the Globe and Mail. He asked some specific questions on that. The matter on the specifics is before the courts. In reference to my office's participation, I was asked, "Did Mr Lyons ever talk to you?" No,

he never talked to me directly. He phoned my office in November. We sent back a message: "Here's the process. Here's the public information around this process."

1510

There was a letter that came in in December 1998 and that was referred to the ORC board of directors to have a look at. In the letter there was never any accusation of illegality. There was a question about the process involved that was taking place.

I just want to remind the Legislature there was no deal signed here, there was no agreement of purchase and sale. The process was looked at by the—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Would the Minister take his seat. Supplementary.

Mr Phillips: I asked you if allegations of corruption had come to you or any of your staff over the last year and a half. I'm gathering from your comments today that there were allegations that either you or your staff were made aware of. I understand that in late December or early January the president resigned. I understand that three board members resigned, whom you replaced. But again, my question is this: Over the last year and a half have there been any allegations to you or your staff of corruption at the Ontario Realty Corp?

Hon Mr Hodgson: The quote that he started out with was a very specific issue that's before the courts. Then he wants to know generically if we heard any allegations. There have been no specific ones that I am aware of, but I can check the records, if you wish. If there had been, I'm sure we would have followed the proper procedures inside the government to report it to the ORC board and they would take appropriate action or to go through the assistant Deputy Attorney General, criminal law division, depending on the nature of the accusation.

I don't have that at my fingertips today. I can tell you that when he started out on the quote in the newspaper, that was in regard to a specific question on a specific file.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): My question is for my honourable friend the Minister of Health. My constituents of Waterloo-Wellington are very interested in the issue of mental health reform. Members may recall that in 1998 the minister's parliamentary assistant, Dan Newman, the honourable member for Scarborough Southwest, did a consultation and a review of the mental health services across the province. In fact, the member consulted directly with my constituents on these matters.

Will the minister provide the members of this House an update of this government's mental health reform initiatives?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Our government has certainly indicated our very strong commitment to mental health reform and to the improvement of services for those who suffer from mental illness. Since 1995 we have invested over \$83 million into the mental health system. We are

reforming the system in a way that we focus on prevention and we ensure we have the community services in place. Of course, we also need to ensure that we have the hospital-based services in place as well.

In June 1998, last year, we announced \$60 million. That money is going to community organizations, funding for community assertive treatment teams and also an expansion of the community investment fund. As well, aside from the \$83 million, we have also announced \$45 million for supportive housing for the mentally ill and we are presently developing a very comprehensive housing policy.

Mr Arnott: In our Blueprint document, our election platform, the government made a commitment to ensure that people who pose a danger to themselves or others can be taken off the streets to get the care they need. Could the minister provide the members of this House with an update on our commitment to help people under these circumstances?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Yes, our government did make a commitment in our Blueprint to ensure that people who do pose a danger to themselves or others have the opportunity to access and receive the care they need. Presently the staff of the Ministry of Health are in the process of taking a look at how new legislation will be drafted. They are taking a look at what other jurisdictions throughout North America and elsewhere have done. We would hope that we could introduce those legislative changes in the very near future.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I have a question for the Minister of the Environment. I've just returned from Durham regional council. They unanimously rejected the development proposal for 2,500 units, the proposal that you butted in on in support of the developer with your letter. They were outraged by your letter. They were flabbergasted. Almost every councillor proudly stood up and said they were going to decide themselves, despite your interference. To their credit, they said no to that application.

In your response to the member for St Catharines, you said that you spoke to a lawyer for the developers, the Tanenbaums. What is the lawyer's name, for the record, please?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Mr Diamond.

Mr Colle: Interestingly, today Mr Diamond was asked that specific question: "Did you, Mr Diamond, speak to anyone from the ministry or to the minister about the application?" Mr Diamond's specific response, on the record at Durham council today, was, "I spoke to no one at the ministry." Either Mr Diamond is wrong or you spoke to someone else. Who did you speak to? Did you speak to other developers in the Tanenbaum group besides Mr Diamond? Because Mr Diamond says he never spoke to you.

Hon Mr Clement: Let me say two things. First of all, on the issue that the honourable member raised first, it is the municipality's responsibility to take a position on the proposed amendments to the official plan. They've made that recommendation. I acknowledged that resolution. They fulfilled their responsibility. That's their decision to make; it's always been their decision to make.

I can tell you that I have not spoken to Mr Diamond about the development. Mr Diamond is correct: I've spoken to him about the pipe. If I can make it clear to the honourable members, once again, for the second week in a row, my job is to defend the class environmental assessment. That's my job as a minister. I was fulfilling my responsibilities as a minister. I did not take a position on the development. I did not take it then; I did not take it last week; I don't take it now.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): My question is for the minister responsible for women's issues. I'm aware that November is Wife Assault Prevention Month. Megan Walker, the director of Battered Women's Advocacy Centre, was quoted as saying, "In the 12 years I've been involved in women's abuse issues and violence against women, I really haven't seen the public awareness commitment I've seen over the last two years from all sorts of different providers."

Minister, can you tell me about some of the initiatives this government is undertaking to increase awareness of domestic violence in this province?

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): I'd like to thank the member for her keen interest in women's issues, especially in this important Wife Assault Prevention Month. Let me say first off that I'm very concerned about wife assault in Ontario. We all need to do better to ensure that we reduce and finally obliterate this horrible violence in the province. From the perspective of the province and the Mike Harris government, we have committed to ensure that we spend \$100 million on programs and services to prevent and address violence in the province.

This week and last week I've been involved in two very important initiatives which I believe will lead to a reduction in wife assault. The first was when Minister Tsubouchi and I went to work with Crime Stoppers to ensure that we came out with a video that talked about wife assault being against the law and let people know that they had an ability to call Crime Stoppers to help women who were in need of their help and might not be able to help themselves.

The other launch was a video this week called A Love That Kills. It was announced at Glenforest school. It talks about students who need to be cautious about entering into relationships where violence exists.

Mrs Munro: Minister, you mentioned the video A Love That Kills. Can you please tell us more about the significance of this video.

Hon Mrs Johns: I believe that this is a very important video for all young women in the province to see. First of all, it's very powerful. It's a tearjerking film that talks about the prevention and the early identification of abusive relationships that might happen with young people.

What it does is talk about a mother's story of a daughter who was killed by her ex-boyfriend. The mother is Dawna Speers, and she has a story and a commitment to this video which couldn't be surpassed by anybody. This video was funded by the Ontario Women's Directorate. It was funded with the help of CAVEAT, the National Film Board, the BC Ministry of Women's Equality and also by the Ministry of the Solicitor General. I'd once again like to thank Minister Tsubouchi for being involved in this.

If anyone here has young women who need this kind of help, I suggest they see the video.

ABORTION

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Solicitor General. This is a frightening time of year for physicians and other health professionals providing abortion services in Ontario. Since 1994, the period between late October and Remembrance Day has seen five attacks by snipers. As we're all aware, a New York doctor was killed last year and before that three Canadians and one American were seriously wounded.

Last year my colleague Marilyn Churley, on behalf of our party, put forward a resolution in this House stating that federal, provincial and territorial governments must co-operate to provide adequate resources to police forces across Canada specifically to ensure the safety and security of all abortion providers. It passed unanimously, it was quite an accomplishment, but I have to ask, where's the action?

The fact is that the number of obstetricians and gynaecologists willing to perform abortions has decreased significantly over the last years. I have to ask you if you're going to stand by and let extremists take away women's right to safe, legal abortions. What are you doing right now to protect those doctors who provide abortion services?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): Everyone who lives in this province deserves to be safe—and that's everyone. That's why it's very important for us to support our efforts to support the police in this province, so they can provide an adequate level of protection for everyone without exception in this province.

That's why we've embarked upon a quality assurance exercise across the province, to make sure that all police forces, regardless of where you live, whether you live in Brockville or Markham or Niagara Falls, are able to provide protection in all ways for all crimes across this province.

We believe as well in our initiative to try to help the police in this effort. We've embarked upon a community policing program. The end result will be 1,000 new

police officers on the front line, on the streets, who will assist to make sure that citizens of this province are protected. This is an investment of about \$150 million which we think is well spent.

Ms Lankin: We all want all Ontarians to be safe, but we're talking about people who are specifically targeted at this time of year, and we're talking about a resolution passed in this House which you and your party supported and on which there's been no action.

Others are taking action. The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada has sent out notices to physicians telling them to wear body armour. Let me quote from the circular: "Consider wearing body armour, including at home. Do not put on or take off your body armour in public, including parking lots and public bathrooms." The OMA has sent out security advisories to physicians. It's deeply disturbing that they have to take these precautions. In the midst of all this panic and fear, I have to say that there is one voice that is notably absent, and that is your government's.

Why are you not taking a leading role in speaking out on this issue against violence and intimidation, and why have you not taken this opportunity to assure physicians and nurses who provide abortions that it's your government's priority to ensure that they're safe, that women can and must continue to have safe and legal access to abortion? Why have you not given the public assurances of actions your government is taking to ensure the safety of abortion providers?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: The Ontario Provincial Police are aware of the situation currently. They are on alert for it, as are many of the municipal police forces. There is an international police task force that is investigating these incidences. I can only reiterate my message from before, that it is very important for us to protect all citizens in this province. It matters not where or how or who, all people deserve to be safe in this province. Certainly that's the direction we have with the OPP, and the OPP certainly acknowledge that, and they participate in making sure that people are safe in their communities and participate as well in this international police force.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): My question is to the Attorney General. I will try to make the question as difficult as the member for London-Fanshawe, but I don't think I can get there.

Weeks ago your ministry referred the now infamous Gilchrist affair to the Ontario Provincial Police for investigation. We on this side of the House have every confidence that an excellent job will be done by the investigators from the OPP.

I want to speak up about the tenor of what is happening in the House. Today we found that we've got ministers who have been named in concerns, we've got ministers who seem to be inconsistent at best and downright confused about who they spoke to and who they didn't speak to. We've got the Minister of the Environ-

ment mentioned, we've got the ex-Municipal Affairs minister mentioned, we've got the Management Board chair mentioned, and we also have heard that there are people linked to the Premier's office who have been mentioned. We've also got new allegations arising that the Ontario Realty Corp is in a mess. We've got a web that continues to grow.

Knowing that the records from the OPP investigation are not made public unless criminal charges are laid, and knowing that a very dark cloud hangs over this House, and knowing that there are unanswered questions to this growing problem, I'm asking if the Attorney General will now call a public inquiry and be helpful to this House, and bring dignity and respect back to this House by calling that public inquiry.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): The member may know that when allegations are made against any member of this House, against any member of the Ontario Public Service, against any minister, against the Premier, should there be such an allegation there is a protocol that is followed. It is strictly followed. It is followed in all instances. The report goes to the assistant Deputy Attorney General, criminal law division, and the job of the assistant Deputy Attorney General in charge of the criminal law division is to review the allegation being made and to make a determination, which he does, about whether to refer it to a police force or not. This is absolutely strict, and I can assure you that it is followed.

Mr Levac: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Again, for the umpteenth time, this protocol has been mentioned, and I would like to know whether or not the Chair feels that because it's been mentioned it needs to be tabled.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I have mentioned, I guess this is the third occasion, that it is referred to but it has not been quoted at length and I have ruled that it is not a point of order. This is the third time I've ruled on that.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In answer to a question today, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing stated, and I believe I quoted him correctly—I don't have Instant Hansard—that his government provided the private sector with incentives to build. I would request unanimous consent for the minister to give a statement as to what incentives he has actually given to the private sector to build housing in this province.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I heard some noes.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I want to indicate my dissatisfaction with an answer given by the Minister of Finance today, and I'm asking for a late show. I'm processing that and will have it in your hands forthwith.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I thank the member very much. All the members will know that if they do

table that, they need to table that with the table. Also, the members should know that the table will inform the appropriate minister.

1530

PETITIONS

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition here which is signed by a number of residents of Davenport, but also a number of residents from the west end of Toronto, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government's decision to slash education funding will lead to the closure of many neighbourhood schools, including one of the most community-oriented schools like F.H. Miller Junior School; and

"Whereas the present funding formula does not take into account the historic and cultural links schools have with their communities nor the special education programs that have developed as a direct need of our communities; and

"Whereas the prospect of closing neighbourhood community schools will displace many children and put others on longer bus routes; and

"Whereas Mike Harris promised in 1995 not to cut classroom spending, but has already cut at least \$1 billion from our schools; and

"Whereas F.H. Miller Junior School is a community school with many links to the immediate neighbourhood, such as the family centre, after-school programs, special programs from parks and recreation, and a heritage language program;

"Therefore we, the undersigned citizens, demand that the Harris government change the funding formula to take into account the historic, cultural and community links that F.H. Miller Junior School has established."

Since I agree with this petition, I'm signing my name to it.

PARAMEDICS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): "To the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health this past spring amended O. Reg. 501/97 under the Ambulance Act so that paramedics are considered no longer qualified to do their job if they accumulate a minimum of six demerit points on their driving record; and

"Whereas this amended regulation has resulted in at least one paramedic being fired from employment"—and again that's now six people, two of whom are from my hometown of Hamilton—"and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health's regulation is far more punitive and harsh than the Ministry of Transporta-

tion's, which monitors and enforces traffic safety through the Highway Traffic Act; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation mails out a notice to drivers at six to nine demerit points and suspends a person's driver's licence at 15 points for a 30-day period; and

"Whereas none of the other emergency services in Ontario, eg, fire and police services, are held to the same standard or punished so harshly; and

"Whereas this amended regulation is not needed since other sections of the Ambulance Act protect the public against unsafe driving and/or criminal behaviour by paramedics (specifically O. Reg. 501/97, part III, section 6, subsections 8, 9 and 10); and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health's actions are blatantly unjust and punitive, and they discriminate against paramedics;

"Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately eliminate any references to the accumulation of demerit points during employment from O. Reg. 501/97 under the Ambulance Act (specifically part III, section 6, subsection 7), thereby allowing the Highway Traffic Act to apply to paramedics; and

"To order the immediate reinstatement of paramedics who have been fired under the regulation."

I continue to support the cause of these paramedics and add my name to this list of petitioners.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Brian Coburn (Carleton-Gloucester): I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of the member from Nepean-Carleton, the Honourable John Baird:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned taxpayers of Ontario, wish to document and convey our requests that

"The Legislative Assembly of Ontario recognize the need for a public elementary school in the Longfields-Davidson Heights community;

"The Legislative Assembly of Ontario recognize that Longfields-Davidson Heights has a current population of 12,000 and a growth rate of 18% per year, and that 1,000 public school children from this community are expected to enter junior kindergarten by September of 2002;

"The Legislative Assembly of Ontario realize that the designated facility servicing Longfields-Davidson Heights, Merivale Public School, is at maximum legal capacity and a second temporary location cannot accommodate more than one year's growth;

"The Legislative Assembly of Ontario allow the use of the education development charges to build new public schools."

It's signed by myself and the Honourable Mr Baird.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): My colleague from Thunder Bay-Atikokan and I continue to receive thousands of signatures on petitions related to the inadequacy of the northern health travel grant. I have some here today that I'd like to read.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographical locations;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

I have hundreds and hundreds of signatures, and I'm very proud to add my name to that petition.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which reads as follows:

"Whereas 13 people died during the first seven months of 1999 on Highway 401 between London and Windsor; and

"Whereas traffic levels on all sections of Highway 401 continue to increase; and

"Whereas Canada's number one trade and travel route was designed in the 1950s for fewer vehicles and lighter trucks; and

"Whereas road funding is almost completely paid through vehicle permit and driving licence fees; and

"Whereas Ontario road users pay 28 cents per litre of tax on gasoline, adding up to over \$2.7 billion in provincial gas taxes and over \$2.3 billion in federal gas taxes;

"We, the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately upgrade Highway 401 to at least a six-lane highway with full paved shoulders and rumble strips; and

"We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario place firm pressure on the federal government to invest its gasoline tax revenue in road safety improvements in Ontario."

I concur, and I will affix my signature to it.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 13 people died during the first seven months of 1999 on Highway 401 between London and Windsor; and

"Whereas traffic levels on all sections of Highway 401 continue to increase; and

"Whereas Canada's number one trade and travel route was designed in the 1950s for fewer vehicles and lighter trucks; and

"Whereas road funding is almost completely paid through vehicle permit and driver licensing fees; and

"Whereas Ontario road users pay 28 cents per litre of tax on gasoline, adding up to over \$2.7 billion in provincial gas taxes and over \$2.3 billion in federal gas taxes;

"We, the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately upgrade Highway 401 to at least a six-lane highway with full paved shoulders and rumble strips."

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

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan):

Earlier, my colleague the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North read into the record a petition that is being signed by literally hundreds of residents in our communities and across northwestern Ontario who are concerned about two-tier access to health care in northern Ontario and the fact that they have to pay often considerable costs to access medically needed care. Because my colleague has already read this petition today, I will not read all the "whereases." I will simply read:

"Therefore, we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

Again, it's been signed by a number of concerned residents. I have affixed my own signature in full agreement with their concerns.

1540

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a number of petitions from various schools. The residents who have signed these petitions are very concerned about school closures, and there is such public anger out there that I have received many of these. I will read the one from

Earlscourt public school. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government's decision to slash education funding could lead to the closure of many neighbourhood schools, including one of the most community-oriented schools like Earlscourt public school; and

"Whereas the present funding formula does not take into account the historic and cultural links schools have with their communities nor the special education programs that have developed as a direct need of our communities; and

"Whereas the prospect of closing neighbourhood schools will displace many children and put others on longer bus routes; and

"Whereas Mike Harris promised in 1995 not to cut classroom spending, but has already cut at least \$1 billion from our school budget; and

"Whereas Earlscourt public school is a community school with many links to the immediate neighbourhood, such as day care, a games room, an open gym, fitness classes and a site for sports activities;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned citizens, demand that the Harris government changes the funding formula to take into account the historic, cultural and community links that Earlscourt public school has established."

Mr Speaker, since I agree with this petition wholeheartedly, I will sign this to present to you.

HEALTH CARE

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I have another petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, headed, "Say no to the privatization of health care."

"Whereas we are concerned about the quality of health care in Ontario; and

"Whereas we do not believe health care should be for sale; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is taking steps to allow profit-driven companies to provide health care services in Ontario; and

"Whereas we won't stand for profits over people;

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

"Do not privatize our health care services."

This is a good petition. I concur with the content and I will affix my signature to it.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 13 people died during the first seven months of 1999 on Highway 401 between London and Windsor; and

"Whereas traffic levels on all sections of Highway 401 continue to increase; and

“Whereas Canada’s number one trade and travel route was designed in the 1950s for fewer vehicles and lighter trucks; and

“Whereas road funding is almost completely paid through vehicle permit and driver licence fees; and

“Whereas Ontario road users pay 28 cents per litre of tax on gasoline, adding up to over \$2.7 billion in provincial gas taxes and over \$2.3 billion in federal gas taxes;

“We, the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately upgrade Highway 401 to at least a six-lane highway with full paved shoulders and rumble strips; and

“We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario place firm pressure on the federal government to invest its gasoline tax revenue in road safety improvements in Ontario.”

I am pleased to add my name to those signatures.

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): This petition is of such importance that residents from all over Ontario have signed this, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas 13 people died during the first seven months of 1999 on Highway 401 between London and Windsor; and

“Whereas traffic levels on all sections of Highway 401 continue to increase; and

“Whereas Canada’s number one trade and travel route was designed in the 1950s for fewer vehicles and lighter trucks; and

“Whereas road funding is almost completely paid through vehicle permit and driver licence fees; and

“Whereas Ontario road users pay 28 cents per litre of tax on gasoline, adding up to over \$2.7 billion in provincial gas taxes and over \$2.3 billion in federal gas taxes;

“We, the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately upgrade Highway 401 to at least a six-lane highway with full paved shoulders and rumble strips; and

“We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario place firm pressure on the federal government to invest its gasoline tax revenue in road safety improvements in Ontario.”

This petition is so important that I’m signing it as well.

OPPOSITION DAY

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

LOGEMENTS À PRIX ABORDABLES

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): It gives me great pleasure to move the following motion:

Be it resolved that, in the opinion of this House, the Mike Harris government should stop its attack on affordable housing and tenants, restore rent controls, and implement the recommendations of the Golden report.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I just want to clarify that the time is going to be equally split among the parties in this debate. I understand there is an understanding among the House leaders on that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): That may be a point of understanding; it’s not a point of order.

Mr Caplan: It’s very welcome to have the opportunity to speak to this very important motion. Certainly, at first glance, it gives me the chance to reaffirm the Ontario Liberal Party’s support and commitment to tenants and to reconfirm our desire for the province to take some real action on the homelessness issue. I’m very pleased that many of my caucus colleagues will be joining this debate. I know that they will speak to the government’s policies that have impacted specifically on their communities across Ontario. I certainly hope that government members are listening and too will be supporting this motion.

The real concern all members of this House should have is that we’re faced with a government that talks the talk, but, when it comes down to it, the Harris government does not walk the walk in protecting tenant rights and preserving their access to justice. Plainly speaking, they are all talk and no action.

They talk about a process which serves tenants. What tenants in this province have is the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal. I’ve already proven in this House and from the minister’s response that the Harris government agenda is to diminish access to reasonable justice for tenants. The Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal is closing hearing locations across the province. They already have done so in Richmond Hill, out in eastern Ontario and have amalgamated things in the Belleville area. The minister confirmed that more of the same is on the way. The Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal has closed very important document filing offices, which, as all members of this House will know, is a very key part of the process that this government has instituted, because tenants now have five calendar days to respond when an application is made against them.

The minister has talked in this House about teleconferencing and video conferencing. Quite frankly, video conferencing doesn’t work unless you have high-speed Internet access, which doesn’t exist in much of the province. Teleconferencing, as any lawyer will tell you, is unfair to the respondents because an adjudicator will have a very difficult time over the telephone being able to assess the credibility of the various proponents. These are options that the government has held out that it has implemented, but in fact I’ve spoken to people in Belleville; I’ve spoken to people in York region. The minister has said that these have been offered, but to date I can find no one who has been offered these types of options. So while the minister considers and studies, tenants are

losing one of the most fundamental rights, the right to defend yourself and have reasonable access to justice. I think that shows.

We have some data from the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal. It shows that of the people who were served with orders for eviction, 53%—well over half—don't even dispute the claim. They don't even go and defend themselves. Why is this? Yesterday we heard in the media that in an analysis of data, one third of tenants don't even receive the order for eviction that has been served against them. One third of people don't even know that something outstanding is happening.

1550

An equal number don't even know that they have to appear within five days, because the form that Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal uses is incredibly confusing, and you have to truly have an advanced degree of communication ability and skill to be able to decipher the form. That's why people who are tenants are being unfairly disadvantaged by this government.

The minister said the study was only interim, that it's only in Toronto and it doesn't have broader implications. I spoke to the Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation—in fact, this government cut their funding in 1996. Obviously, the minister and the Premier and members of the Harris government aren't interested in knowing how their legislation, how their actions have disadvantaged tenants. If you truly have the desire to know—but I think you already do—then restore the funding.

The Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal has said, through the minister, that they're going to do more with less. There's no evidence of that. In fact, they're doing less with less. They really have no plans to correct any of these problems.

The assault on tenants in Ontario continues. I've had contact with legal clinics around the province. They tell us that tenants are intimidated by the process. They all say the same thing, that many see the notices but just move on. They don't even know that there are various processes for appeal.

When Al Leach, the minister, introduced the legislation, when it was passed, he promised access to justice with their new process, but so far they've delivered nothing. We have a process which favours landlords, we have cutbacks in the hearing process, and we have an unwillingness to change when real problems are brought to the attention of this government. They talk a good game but they're not able to deliver any real justice for tenants, and they really don't seem to care. Quite frankly, they need to stop their needless attack on the tenants of Ontario.

One of the prime examples is the regime of vacancy decontrol and the gutting of real rent control in this province. When the this government brought in their reforms, they promised it would not affect affordable housing. That's not the case. We have Statistics Canada and Canada Mortgage and Housing data which shows that tenant income is on the decline yet rental costs are increasing. The guideline of 30% is used by landlords

and others to assess what is an acceptable level for payment of accommodation costs. Half of Ontario's tenants pay 30% or more of their combined family income before tax on rental accommodation; a payment of 50% of your income, you're considered to be at risk of being homeless. That number has crept up over the last few years and is quickly approaching 20% of all tenants. That is shocking, and really demonstrates the problem and the magnitude.

The government also promised that there would be affordable housing provided in this area of vacancy decontrol. Al Leach stood up and said that he guaranteed that within two years 10,000 new rental housing units would be built in Ontario. That's what the Harris government said, and it's not happening, not at all. In fact, in 1998, in Toronto alone a grand total of 159 rental units were newly created. This year, 1999, 18 units have been created through the first eight months. It is not only getting worse but we are losing, on a net basis, rental accommodation in this province. I greatly await the Canada Mortgage and Housing numbers which are going to be coming out shortly. I think that they too will confirm it.

This is not just a Toronto problem. I've talked to people in Hamilton. I've talked to people in Kitchener-Waterloo, in Barrie, in Peterborough, in Muskoka. It's the same pattern that repeats itself over and over. You have to ask yourself, has all the Harris government's talk about increasing rental stock and affordable housing meant any real action for tenants? I think the conclusion is clear. In a word, no. Their Tenant Protection Act should rightfully be called the tenant rejection act, or even perhaps the tenant eviction act.

This government fails to realize that their policies have resulted in much of the homeless problem that we have today. The Premier and the ministers and the members of this government love to point fingers. They like to say it's the municipalities or it's the federal government. They're first in line when it comes time to passing the buck in doing anything. But that's not surprising, because they're just trying to divert from their abysmal record.

In the election campaign in 1995, they promised to implement shelter allowances in Ontario. In fact, they haven't done anything about it; it's another broken promise. I shouldn't say that, because it's even worse: They cut the shelter allowances that previously existed and also cancelled all the affordable housing projects that were on the drawing board. They claim they are going to fund some of the shelter costs. The province used to fund 100%, and they have downloaded 80% of the cost onto municipalities. I have confirmed figures from the city of Toronto that the provincial level of support for shelter costs is now down to 73%, simply off-loading costs and provincial responsibilities to municipalities.

The government has promised to make lands available for shelter space. The city has provided land, but the province has yet to do so and I doubt it ever will—perhaps only to developers and others.

The Golden report called for no net loss of rental units, and yet we have Tory activist Jane Pepino appearing before the Ontario Municipal Board and successfully challenging the right of cities to protect rental housing stock.

The Golden report called for new support for housing beds, especially for those with mental illnesses. At the same time we have a government that is closing hospital beds around the province. To date, the government has made a commitment but nothing has translated.

Finally, the government has said it will be spending \$100 million. This promise is eight months old, and not one penny has been spent yet. In fact the money is not provincial money; it comes from the federal government. So the province takes from the federal government on one hand, makes commitments it has no intention of fulfilling and then calls on the federal government to provide even more. There is no generosity in the Harris government towards the vulnerable and the unfortunate who have found themselves in these circumstances, and that is why this motion is very timely. It directs the government to fulfill its responsibilities and to stop its attack on tenants, and I ask all members of the House to support this very timely motion. I look forward to further debate.

Mr Bisson: It's with great pleasure that I get into this debate. I want to say, first of all, that we'll have a couple of other members, the member for Trinity-Spadina and the member for Nickel Belt, speak on this.

I want to say up front that I'm going to vote for this motion the same way I voted in favour of rent control legislation when we brought it to this House back in the early 1990s under the Bob Rae government. In 1996, when I was the housing critic, we brought a motion into the House to restore the NDP rent control legislation, and I voted in favour of that as well. I will vote in favour of this Liberal motion even though the Liberals voted against our rent control legislation back in the early 1990s.

In 1996 the Liberals voted against my motion, which would have restored the NDP rent control. The Liberal caucus voted against it and said "yes" to landlords and "no" to tenants. How they forget. The wonderful thing about Liberals is that it's like one size fits all. They're like chameleons. They put on a jacket that says on one side "I'm a New Democrat" and on the other "I'm a Tory."

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: I will Liberal-bash because you guys deserve to get bashed for the positions you take.

At the height of this thing, we know this guy Jean Chrétien, the Prime Minister of Canada? He's what party? He's a Liberal as well. What has the Liberal government in Ottawa done? It has gotten out of the housing business. It has divested its responsibility as a federal government to deal with housing and gotten completely out of the housing business.

Now the Liberals come to this House and say to us: "We believe in rent control. We want to help tenants

around this province. Trust us, the Liberal Party of Ontario." You have no credibility on this issue, and I take exception to your guys coming forward in this Parliament and saying, "We're all for rent control."

I'll vote for your motion because I'm all for anything that puts forward the ability to deal with tenants' concerns when it comes to rent control and other issues around housing. I was consistent in 1990, I was consistent in 1996 and I'm consistent today in voting in favour of rent control in this particular debate.

1600

I have to say about the Conservatives that they are also consistent. I disagree philosophically with where they're going, but the Tories opposed our legislation when we brought it into this House in 1993, they opposed the motion I put forward in order to restore NDP rent control, they are opposed to the concept of rent control, but at least they're honest about it. They're telling tenants, "We don't want rent control, we don't believe in rent control and we're not going to propose rent control; we're opposed to it."

The Liberals—a little bit of this, a little bit of that. Who knows where they're going to go if they're ever the government. It's whatever way the wind blows. I wouldn't trust them for one second if they were government and bringing in rent control, because I also remember what happened under the David Peterson government. They brought forward rent control legislation—

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Rent review, not rent control.

Mr Bisson: Rent review, actually. They didn't bring in rent control. That's a very good point. They brought rent review to try to accommodate some sort of concession between landlords and tenants. All they did was create this huge bureaucracy that became a real problem not only for landlords but for tenants. In the end I still support the idea of rent review, but they're certainly not to be commended on their position.

On the question of public housing, I really have to make the point to the government that you were wrong back in 1995 to cancel the housing projects that were put forward by the NDP government and had been done. We are now starting to see the difficulty that the cancellation of those projects has put tenants in across this province.

I want to bring to this House the special situation we have up on the James Bay coast. We have an acute housing crisis. We have a federal Liberal government that is not willing to deal adequately with the housing issues on the James Bay coast. We have people in communities like Kashechewan, Attawapiskat, Moose Factory, and the list goes on, where you're basically putting 20 and 30 people into a house because there's inadequate housing in those communities. You go into the community of Kashechewan—wonderful people really trying to organize things in their community, dynamic, but they lack the tools because the federal Liberal government refuses to deal with the inadequate housing problems we have within the James Bay communities.

If the Liberals in this House here in Ontario are proposing to do something about housing, please start by talking to your federal caucus. Go talk to your Liberal people up in Ottawa and tell them that the very least they can do is to try to address the housing problems we have in the James Bay community. It's unacceptable that a child or anybody else has to be forced to be in a situation of living in a house with 20 and 30 people in it in order to have a roof over their heads. You cannot study properly in that kind of environment, there's no ability to deal with having your own space, as a young person to try to deal with growing up—and what it means for the adults in those situations. I wish you were consistent and would at least go talk to the federal Liberal government and deal with the issue of housing when it comes to James Bay.

J'ai besoin de dire à la fin de ce discours que je sais que mes collègues du Parti libéral ont un gros problème, mais je demande seulement une affaire. On connaît l'opposition du NPD : on a toujours été et on va toujours être en faveur de la législation qui va rechercher les droits des locataires à travers la province et qui protège les loyers. C'est quelque chose qu'on a fait en opposition, c'est quelque chose qu'on a fait quand on était au gouvernement, où on a pensé de la législation en faveur des locataires, et on le fait encore en tant qu'opposition.

Le Parti libéral a toujours de différentes positions qui dépendent de la journée et qui dépendent un peu d'où s'en va le baromètre politique dans la journée. Je demande au Parti libéral de prendre au moins une position et d'essayer de la garder pour une fois. Vous avez voté des deux bords de cette affaire-là, dépendant de quel bord le vent s'en va. On va vous supporter sur votre motion parce qu'on pense que c'est important. Mais je veux dire—je ne peux pas dire le mot « hypocrite » parce que ce n'est pas parlementaire, et je retire ce mot-là parce que je ne voudrais pas dire un mot qui n'est pas parlementaire, mais je ne trouve pas un autre mot pour décrire la position que le Parti libéral est en train de prendre.

Monsieur le Président, avec ça je veux dire que je vais voter en faveur de la motion, mais je garde mes principes et je voterai encore une autre fois à cette assemblée.

Mr Brian Coburn (Carleton-Gloucester): I'd like to share my time with the member from Willowdale and the member from Scarborough Southwest.

It's a real pleasure today for me to rise and speak and join in this debate and talk about the record on rent control. It gives us an opportunity to talk about our record and some of the positive things that we've done to improve the situation in Ontario.

If we go back to 1995 and look at the huge challenge that we inherited—"huge challenge" is I guess an understatement; the total mess that we inherited—as a result of the dysfunctional rent control programs of the Liberals and the NDP, we did have a huge challenge in front of us to try and put a plan in place that would serve us well into the new millennium.

In 1986, the Liberals introduced maximum rent. The minister of the day was Mr Curling. The maximum rent

was, I suppose, the short name that was given to this piece of legislation, but what it in fact did was permit landlords to increase rents up to a maximum amount, and failing to do that, they could bank those increases. For example, if the allowable increase in one specific year was 5% and the landlord raised it about 2%, the landlord then could bank the 3%. You can just imagine the potential chaos down the road if this went on for five, six, seven years. The poor tenant gets slammed with an increase that could be 15% or 20% and had absolutely no control over that.

That was a piece of legislation that was absolutely flawed. But in 1992 the NDP really didn't do very much to improve it. They continued on with that same philosophy.

In 1995 this government recognized that there was a huge problem with respect to rent and tenants and landlords. The present system did not work. We had a track record now of about 10 years and the potential for it to work was simply not there. Therefore, we enacted and brought forward the Tenant Protection Act, which was proclaimed June 17, 1998. We recognized that the process that had been in place with the previous governments was short-sighted and was absolutely hazardous and dangerous to renters.

The short title was "maximum rent." I just want to get back to that. People said there was rent control. Yes, there was rent control, but it was kind of camouflaged by maximum rent. Therefore, if the landlord didn't bring in the maximum rent in the specific year and brought in something less that the tenants seem to be happy with, they had a false sense of security, not knowing or realizing that the difference between the rent agreed upon and the maximum rent could be banked and that this would place that individual or individuals in a disastrous situation in the future.

With the Tenant Protection Act we eliminated the maximum rent policy. For those tenants before that act came into place, they were protected by our Tenant Protection Act. We had stopped the cumulative effect of the maximum rent. The Tenant Protection Act will eventually phase out maximum rent.

For those who have signed leases after the Tenant Protection Act came in, thank goodness the maximum rent act and philosophy did not apply.

1610

Under the Tenant Protection Act, as soon as the tenant's rent is either equal to or greater than the amount of the maximum rent, a landlord is no longer eligible to apply maximum rent. Furthermore, the maximum rent applies to tenants who have occupied their units since before the TPA was proclaimed. In other words, a landlord cannot carry over maximum rent to a new tenant.

The old system didn't work, and tenants frequently lived in inadequately maintained units where you had faucets dripping, paint peeling, toilets that wouldn't flush, elevators that wouldn't work more often than not, broken locks on the front door that hadn't been fixed in years, just to name a few of the problems.

It did not work for landlords either.

At the same time, in creating the Tenant Protection Act, we needed to create an environment that allows landlords to make a return on their investment so that they can improve existing maintenance and build new buildings.

Ontario's housing stock had become increasingly run down, and millions of dollars in repairs were not being done because the previous legislation discouraged landlords from doing major renovations by unfairly restricting their ability to finance repairs.

Under other governments, the annual rent increase was significantly higher than under ours. In 1992, the annual rent increase guideline was 6%. In 1987, the annual rent increase guideline was 5.2%. In 1985, the annual rent increase guideline was 6%. Our record shows a guideline consistently between 2.8% and 3%. Furthermore, the annual rent increase guideline for 1999 is 3%, and for the year 2000, it is 2.6%, the lowest amount in the 25-year history of rent control in Ontario.

To explain the guideline and how it is calculated: It is calculated using a consumer price index that is averaged over a rolling three-year period. As a result, in addition, the 10% reduction in the education portion of the property taxes that this government implemented will benefit tenants over the next three years.

Now the annual rent increase guideline is fair and sensible and it results in reasonable rent increases for tenants and landlords.

Another misconception: It's incorrect to state that there is no rent control in Ontario. Every tenant who has occupied an apartment since the Tenant Protection Act was implemented continues to be protected by rent control, only there is something that is affordable and that they do understand, and there is nothing hidden that will sabotage them along the way.

Under the new legislation, vacancy decontrol has been implemented. Vacancy decontrol does not remove rent control. Rather, vacancy decontrol allows the landlord and the tenant to freely negotiate the terms of rent instead of rent that reflects the market value of the apartment.

Rent control applies to tenants who have moved into an apartment since the protection act was proclaimed.

There are some very clear guidelines under the Tenant Protection Act, very straightforward and very clear-cut. Under the Tenant Protection Act, a sitting tenant's rent can only be increased by the amount of the annual rate-increase guideline that is set by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and only once every 12 months, and only if the tenant has received 80 days' written notice of the increase.

Once again, just to remind members opposite, the annual rent increase guideline is 3% for 1999 and 2.6% in the year 2000. Actually, this would be a multiple of the guidelines that were in the previous governments' days.

I'd just to talk a little bit more about the Tenant Protection Act that was proclaimed on June 17, 1998. Under that act, most residential rental accommodation units were covered, including high-rise rental units,

single-family homes, basement units, rental condominiums, care homes and mobile homes. The Tenant Protection Act deals with all aspects of residential tenancies.

The Tenant Protection Act also was guided by the red tape initiatives of this government to streamline and make more efficient; legislation that combined six pieces of legislation that governed landlords and tenants, plus the building code and the Planning Act, into one cohesive piece of legislation. The Tenant Protection Act levelled the playing field for both tenants and property owners.

The Tenant Protection Act was created with a number of initiatives and goals in mind: To protect tenants from unfair rent increases and arbitrary evictions and harassment and to provide a strong security of tenure; to focus protection on tenants rather than on units; and to create a better climate for maintenance and investment in new construction, thereby creating jobs.

Just to expand on that a little bit, this government has taken other initiatives that have helped with the creation of rental units. The very fact that we scrapped the land transfer tax for first-time buyers of new homes has encouraged people to buy new homes. If you look at the construction boom we have witnessed this year, it is evident that new homebuyers are taking advantage of the attractive environment we've created for them to get on with their lives and invest in a new home. This has helped create jobs. It's helped strengthen the economy and it's helped create rental vacancies. I don't want to minimize the impact of cutting taxes and cutting red tape that has enabled first-time homebuyers to go out and take advantage of no land transfer tax. All of this has a ripple effect in helping us provide more rental accommodation.

We also had a view to get tougher on landlords that failed to take care of their buildings, to provide a faster, more accessible system, to resolve disputes between landlords and tenants by moving disputes from the courts to the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal, to deliver a more streamlined, cost-effective administration with less red tape, and to create a climate where people will invest in new rental housing stock and existing rental housing stock.

This government is different than the former governments. Under the old Liberal regime, rental housing starts declined by 21.4%; total housing starts declined by 40.5% between 1987 and 1990. Under the next government, the NDP, it was even worse. They failed to act while rental housing starts plummeted by 74.4% during their mandate and total housing starts declined by 43%.

Under the Mike Harris government between 1995 and 1998, private rental unit starts have more than doubled. In 1995 there were 610; in 1998, 1,270. Total housing starts have increased by 50%. All of this helps to create jobs and inspires hope for the future—a strong economy for a strong Ontario.

Unfortunately, and it was mentioned by the member opposite, from Timmins-James Bay, there's been one partner missing at the table, and that's been the federal government.

1620

The federal government seems unwilling to encourage developers to build new rental housing. In fact, apartment builders pay 75% more in GST and higher mortgage insurance than home builders. This has been brought to their attention certainly by our leader time and time again, and there has been no movement. Actually it's something similar to tax cuts creating jobs. Possibly, through the leadership of the Mike Harris government, the message is finally getting through to the senior level of government, and they may realize that tax cuts do create jobs.

Our past experience in Ontario has shown that governments do not build housing cost-effectively; in fact, we're more of a disincentive to developers. In the period from 1985 to 1995, it is more than obvious that throwing money at the problem has not resolved it; in fact, it drove us further into debt, and excessive taxes and regulation imposed by previous governments have in large part created the current shortages in rental housing.

We are working on better, longer-term solutions for housing. We believe the role of this government and future governments is to foster an environment where new housing is created by the private sector and we continue to remove barriers to building new rental housing. Former governments didn't get it then, and they don't get it now: that a strong economy gives us a brighter future and a stronger Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I'm very grateful to have four minutes or so, I believe, to address and support the resolution of my colleague.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Only four minutes.

Mr Sergio: I'm so delighted to hear the government member saying that it's only four minutes. It's because of the graciousness of the democratic system that we have in Ontario and under this government that we are enjoying so little time. It is because of this government that we don't have enough time to address the issue.

The issue in front of us today is a very important one.

Interjections.

Mr Sergio: The government can heckle as long as they want, but as soon as they were elected, they said, "We are going to protect tenants in Ontario." That is until the minister found a chair in this House and said, "We are going to eliminate rent controls in Ontario." He went about and introduced legislation, and the Premier said that any change we will be bringing to rent control legislation will have to benefit the tenants of Ontario first.

Now we know, sadly all too well, what indeed that piece of legislation meant and continues to mean and will mean for the thousands and thousands of tenants in Ontario. It means complete desperation, because they have no idea where to go. Just let me remind the Premier, the Minister of Housing and the members on the government side that we are, I would say, at the door of a very long and cold winter, and I would like them to know

where those people, the homeless people, will be going during those very cold and long winter nights and months.

I have to give it to the government member who just spoke, because yes, the government may have helped to create less than 1,200 units, but we have a 10-year-long waiting list of 40,000 people, for the benefit of the member. What is the government doing? Absolutely nothing. Since the previous minister introduced legislation and that government approved it, the Harris government went into hibernation and forgot about tenants in Ontario. It is a complete shame, really, because they are caught in a situation where if they have to move, for whatever reason, they will have to pay whatever rent on the next unit they find. This is not sitting too well with a lot of the seniors in Ontario, who live not only under rent control but on a very measly income, many of them on the single Canada pension and the other government pensions they get; that's it. They find it very, very difficult.

I would like to say a lot more because in that rent control legislation they have given the local municipality the power to demolish existing rental units, on top of the elimination of rent control. This adds insult to injury to all the tenants in Ontario.

I congratulate the member here who has brought the resolution in front of us today. I hope the members on the government side indeed will reconsider their position and support the motion that is in front of us. At least they can say: "Yes, we have created a problem. Rents are skyrocketing. Rental units are continuing to diminish." Not only are new units not being built, but they are allowing municipalities to demolish existing rental units.

The stock is going down while the demand is increasing continually. Now we have some 10-year waiting periods. I don't think it's fair. I don't think it's fair for this government to force this particular situation on the tenants of Ontario. I hope that we can all support the resolution from the member for Don Valley East.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I won't speak very long this afternoon, even though I would like to, because I would like to leave a large portion of time to my esteemed colleague from Trinity-Spadina, who has a very large number of renters in his constituency. But let me say just a few things here this afternoon in response to this opposition day that has been put forward by the Liberal Party.

I am always astonished at how the Liberals can play both sides of the fence all of the time; I truly am. I always know where the Conservatives are coming from. I am usually opposed to where they are coming from, but at least I know where they are. I never know where the Liberals are, because on any given day of the week they are changing their position on every single issue that we are facing.

I was part of a government between 1990 and 1995 which made it a priority to introduce rent controls in Ontario. I very well remember that legislation put forward by my former colleague Dave Cooke. I remember

the position this gang over here took. The Liberals voted against the NDP legislation to have rent controls on Ontario. That's how concerned they were about tenants between 1990 and 1995. The Ontario Liberal Party voted against the rent control legislation that our NDP government brought in. That's where they were on rent control.

What's even more interesting is that same Ontario Liberal Party then voted against the legislation brought in by the Conservatives to end rent control. They were on both sides of the fence on the same issue. They don't know if they're coming or going and they sure aren't protecting tenants. They shouldn't pretend to even want to protect tenants, because nothing in terms of what they have done would point to any concrete evidence whatsoever that the Liberal Party cares about tenants.

Having said that, I can't leave this issue without saying that I don't believe the Conservative Party cares about tenants either. They're both in the same boat.

I looked at their legislation that was passed in the last session supposedly to protect tenants—

Mr Marchese: The Tenant Protection Act.

Ms Martel: The Tenant Protection Act. Thank you very much, my colleague from Trinity-Spadina. Of course, that legislation did nothing to protect tenants either. Tenants in Ontario who are being gouged by this current Conservative government should well remember that they got no protection under the Conservatives in the last mandate. They certainly got no protection when the Liberals were in power and they got nothing from the Liberals in terms of even advocating when we were in government. Both the parties voted against our rent control. So there you go.

Mr Speaker, I should say that I haven't had a chance to congratulate you. You have not been in the chair when I have been speaking. I just want to say that I'm very pleased that we have a Deputy Speaker from northern Ontario. I offer you my condolences in the hard job that you have ahead of you, Mr Speaker.

Let me say, though, on the second issue—and this has to do with affordable housing; this is a very serious issue, and I won't even touch the incredible problem that we have in this province with respect to homelessness right now—but I am always amazed, again, when I hear the Liberals talk about their concerns for affordable housing and point to the Conservatives and demand that the Conservatives do something. Frankly, both parties should do something.

1630

Since 1993, the federal Liberal government in Ottawa has had no housing policy whatsoever—none, absolutely none. The federal government abandoned affordable housing, abandoned seniors, abandoned families with a low income as far back as 1993, when they stopped participating with the province of Ontario and other provincial jurisdictions in affordable housing projects. So it's just a little hard to take today to have an Ontario Liberal Party come into this Legislature and talk about what the government should do about affordable housing.

What are you saying to your federal cousins in Ottawa about affordable housing, folks? We have a federal Liberal government under Jean Chrétien that has a \$21-billion surplus in the EI account, most of that gotten off the backs of workers, who should have more benefits for EI, not the cuts that they've received under federal Liberals. But having said that, if the government at the federal level wanted to do something about housing, they have more than enough money at their disposal to do something concrete to make sure that people aren't going homeless, to ensure that seniors and low-income families have the housing they need and can live in decent, affordable apartments in this city and every other city across this province.

It's a little bit hard to take to hear the Liberals trying to criticize the Conservatives when their own cousins in Ottawa, the people who are from their own party, have completely abandoned affordable housing since 1993—abandoned, and with the huge surplus that they've got.

Now, I don't want to let the Conservatives get away on this, because they abandoned affordable housing too. They just did it two years after the federal Liberals abandoned—

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): On a point of order, Speaker: Just before the honourable member goes into the rest of her speech, she was doing so well and I would hate for her to lose her track of thought here and divert attention to this side of the House. I really think that the attention on the federal government—

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): I don't think you have a point of order.

Member for Nickel Belt.

Ms Martel: Thank you for the intervention. Look, it's criminal what both of you are doing with respect to affordable housing, which is nothing. Absolutely nothing. I don't want you to get away with it here this afternoon.

Let's be clear. You abandoned affordable housing too, you just did it two years later, after the federal Liberals. We are in a position in this province now where we have thousands and thousands of people who are living in accommodation that they can ill afford because your rent controls have not worked. We have thousands of other people who are living on the streets, not just single individuals but families crowded in hostels, families on the street.

This government and the federal Liberal government have got to come to terms with the fact that developers in this province are not building affordable housing units. They have no interest in doing that. There's no money in it for them. Despite the changes you made in your alleged Tenant Protection Act, there's no evidence that there has been an increase in building affordable rental units for families who need it and for seniors who need it. That's a fact.

Today, as we deal with this motion that is before us, the Conservative Party as well has to look at why that has happened and has to understand that they are doing nothing to deal with that very serious situation.

The member from Carleton-Gloucester spoke a little bit about the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal, so that gave me an in to make some comments about that very tribunal right now.

In northern Ontario, as a result of the changes this government made to establish the housing tribunal, we had one mediator—one, all across northern Ontario—to handle disputes between tenants and landlords. The fact is that, as of this month, November, that one mediator who was in place trying to deal with all tenancy issues across northern Ontario has also had her job surplused. So from here on in, all landlord-tenant disputes that would otherwise be handled by a mediator in northern Ontario will now be handled by a mediator in either eastern Ontario or southern Ontario. Clearly, that means those issues are going to be handled by teleconference or videoconferencing.

The blame for this has to go right back to the Conservative Party with the development of the tribunal, because even in the original plan for staffing of the tribunal and staffing of the mediation unit, there was not a position for a mediator anywhere in northern Ontario—not a one—not in northeastern Ontario, not in northwestern Ontario. You, Mr Speaker, would know full well the distances between those two parts of the north.

The only reason that we have had the benefit of a mediator up until this month was because when the tribunal was established there were some transitional monies that were available to deal with the changeover and there were 45 rental officers in our area who were surplus, courtesy of this government, so the northern Ontario regional office took some of the money and hired a mediator to work out of Sudbury to handle landlord and tenant issues across the whole north. But it was only because of that surplus money and only because of all the people who were losing their jobs that we even had this single individual working in Sudbury to service all parts of northern Ontario.

The government has the responsibility to ensure that it does not discriminate against landlords and tenants in northern Ontario, and the government is doing that very thing under the current system that is in place. The government, however, has an opportunity to change that because we know that at the present time KPMG is doing an operational review of the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal. That was ordered as a part of the changeover to the new system. One year or so after the tribunal went into effect, there had to be an operational review to determine if the new system was working, if clients were happy, what the caseload was and what kind of new staffing arrangements would have to be arrived at in order to serve people in all parts of the province.

I know that operational review is almost complete. I certainly hope the staff at KPMG have identified a problem that we have identified in northern Ontario; that is, landlords and tenants should have access to the same mediation services as do tenants and landlords in all other parts of the province. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing should take the recommendations which I'm

sure will come from KPMG and encourage colleagues at cabinet to staff up mediation services in northern Ontario so that we have at least one mediator in the northwest and at least one in the northeast.

I understand that the volume, the caseload, is not as high in northern Ontario as it is in Metropolitan Toronto, for example, but that doesn't mean the government should discriminate against landlords and tenants in our part of our province. This can be clearly resolved by appointing two mediators to handle the two parts of northern Ontario so that people get face-to-face personal access to a mediator.

I will wrap up now because I have stolen far more time than I should have from my colleague from Trinity-Spadina, but I do want to say again that I am always clearly amazed when the Liberals can come in and argue both sides of the fence on an issue that's so important. I know where the Tories stand. They deserve to be condemned too when it comes to rent control because they certainly haven't done anything, and there is certainly a huge problem of homelessness because this Conservative government has backed out of affordable housing projects. But the Liberals had a chance to vote for rent control between 1990 and 1995—they voted against—and their federal cousins have done nothing since 1993 to create affordable housing, despite a \$21-billion surplus in the EI account.

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): It's my pleasure to participate in the opposition day motion today in the name of the member for Don Valley East. I want to begin by saying that I will not be voting in favour of the motion.

The need for affordable rental housing is a subject that affects residents across Ontario, and indeed affects many residents in my riding of Scarborough Southwest. In fact, the last national census indicated that 45% of single family households in Scarborough Southwest consisted of rental accommodation. This compared to an Ontario figure of 27%. At the same time, the average family income in Scarborough Southwest was 18.3% below the provincial average. Therefore, I have a great deal of interest in the motion before the Legislative Assembly today.

The contention that somehow this government is attacking affordable housing and tenants and abandoning rent controls and ignoring the Golden report is ludicrous. In fact, in the year 2000 the rental increase guidelines will be 2.6% and those will be the lowest in the 25-year history of rental regulations in our province. This is a fact that the Liberals and NDP don't ever want to hear mentioned, so I'm going to repeat it again: In the year 2000 the rental increase guidelines will be the lowest in the 25-year history of rent regulations in Ontario.

1640

As the member for Carleton-Gloucester indicated, the Tenant Protection Act established the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal as an independent adjudicative agency responsible for administering the act and informing the public concerning the legal rights and obligations of both

landlords and tenants. Despite recent reports to the contrary, the number of applications to the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal, including evictions, has remained constant.

As Mr Phil Dewan of the Fair Rental Policy Organization stated in the June-July edition of Fair Exchange: "There has been no increase in eviction applications since landlord-tenant matters were moved from the courts to the tribunal. Claims of skyrocketing numbers of evictions are blatant lies!" In fact, in the last year of operation of the courts, the number of applications was 65,050 versus 65,000 for the first year of the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal.

The Liberals and NDP want to talk about what this government has done to rent controls, but I would encourage them to look at the facts. The facts I want to quote are from the period 1985-99. Let's look at what happened under the Peterson Liberal regime from 1985 to 1990. Rental increases in 1985 were 6%; in 1986, 4%; in 1987, 5.2%; in 1988, 4.7%; in 1989, 4.6%; in 1990, 4.6%. This represents an average allowable rent increase under the Liberals of 4.9%.

There are countless examples during the Liberal years where rent increases went far beyond the allowable guidelines. In my own riding of Scarborough Southwest, residents of several high-rise complexes discovered at first hand how the Liberals were not committed to rent controls in the province. In February 1988, the tenants of 3161 Eglinton Avenue East, in Scarborough, were hit with a rent increase of 20.16%. In January 1989, the residents of 44 Pharmacy Avenue saw their rent increase by 12.9%. In September of that year, the residents of 1445 Kingston Road were handed an increase of a whopping 22.58%. Not to be outdone, they went after the residents at 1 Brimley Road, and the rent increases that were assigned to the residents there were 17.21%. So much for the Liberal record on rent control.

Then, in 1991, along came the NDP and their tax hikes. That's a story for another day. We're going to talk about their record on rent control. In 1991, 5.4%; in 1992, 6%; in 1993, 4.9%; in 1994, 3.2%. The average allowable rent increase under the NDP was 4.9%, the same as the Liberals.

Then, in 1995, the Mike Harris government was elected. Let's look at those numbers: in 1995, 2.9%; in 1996, 2.8%; in 1997, 2.8%; in 1998, 3%; in 1999, 3%; and as I indicated, for the year 2000 the increase will be 2.6%. This makes the average allowable rent increase under the Mike Harris government 2.9%.

Let's review the numbers one more time: the average allowable rent increase under the Liberals, 4.9%; under the NDP, 4.9%; and under this government, 2.9%. I ask you, which government has demonstrated its commitment to tenants in this province?

For the honourable member to imply that the Harris government has in some way done away with or denigrated rent controls is simply not factual. In order to build new, affordable rental units in our province, we have introduced measures to reduce the cost of new

rental housing with more favourable property tax treatment, rebate provincial sales tax on affordable housing and make government lands available. In addition, we have streamlined the entire land use process in Ontario and passed the new Planning Act, which significantly shortened the time frames for decision-making. For example, the official plans that used to take nearly two years to approve are now dealt with in as little as three months. Official plan amendments that used to take 15 months to process are now approved in two months or less. Subdivision applications that used to take 33 months are now processed in five months. Consents have gone from nine months to three and a half.

As a result of these improvements, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing's caseload has been nearly cut in half. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has become the single contact for provincial land use planning, allowing us to provide one-window planning service.

In addition, this government has updated the Ontario building code; we wanted a building code everyone could work with.

We wanted to continue our efforts to streamline the provincial municipal building processes as recommended by the Red Tape Commission. Ultimately, the goal is to make the construction-approval process timely, efficient, fair and consistent in every building department, fire department and provincial office across Ontario, while protecting public safety.

However, there's still much more to be done to encourage construction of new rental units. Unfortunately, we can't do it without the co-operation of other levels of government.

The member laughs. We have repeatedly asked the Liberal government in Ottawa to reduce the high GST on the construction of new apartments. Repeatedly, they have refused. Perhaps the member from Don Valley East, with his connections in Ottawa, might be able to offer his assistance on this matter.

We have also asked the federal Liberal government in Ottawa to reduce the high mortgage-insurance premiums for the construction of new rental housing. What was the Liberal government's response? They doubled the premiums that year. I say shame on them.

The Mike Harris government has been very proactive in working to prevent the dwindling supply of rental housing in Ontario. The 275,000 social housing units and rent-geared-to-income subsidies in Ontario have been maintained. The government has also committed \$45 million this year to fund 1,000 new dedicated supportive housing units, which will provide support in housing to individuals with problems such as mental illness and addiction.

Under the former Liberal regime, rental housing starts actually declined by 21.4%. Under the NDP, the situation got even worse. Rental housing starts plummeted by 74.4% during their mandate. I say shame.

Let's look at what our government has done: We've eliminated the first \$2,000 of provincial sales tax in new

rental unit developments, we've created a new lower tax class for rental properties, we've committed to use public lands to create a minimum of 500 units of affordable housing, we've placed limits on the scope of services for which municipalities can levy development charges, we've streamlined the planning and approval process and we've rationalized large sections of the Ontario building code.

Under a Mike Harris government, between 1995 and 1998, private rental unit starts more than doubled.

Unfortunately, the Liberal government in Ottawa seems unwilling to encourage the construction of new rental housing. Apartment builders pay 75% more GST and higher mortgage insurance than home builders do. The Liberal government's action plan in Ottawa—or lack of an action plan, as I want to refer to it—to deal with this problem of affordable housing and its direct impact on homelessness was to appoint a minister responsible for homelessness. Unfortunately, this appointment came with no power, no decision-making authority and no money. The Liberal government in Ottawa's failure to play a role in encouraging the construction of affordable rental housing units has been the subject of much heated debate for months.

On March 25, at the Toronto-sponsored summit on homelessness, one of the actions of Mayor Mel Lastman was to urge the federal government to pursue waiving the GST on building materials used in the construction of affordable units. The mayor went on to say, "The federal government must own up to its responsibility." I couldn't agree with him more.

In response, of course, what did the federal government say? Federal Liberal GTA minister David Collette gave us a temper tantrum. Minister Collette said, "We are not going to stand there and listen to these distortions, this outrageous conduct by the mayor of Canada's largest city, when the government of Canada is indeed doing its part." When Mayor Lastman then simply asked, as only he can, "Where's the money?" Minister Collette stormed out of the meeting.

The mayor didn't go after the province, he went after the federal Liberal government. Even the Toronto Star, on March 27, their editorial said: "Ottawa has an important role. The federal government can waive the GST on building materials used to build affordable units. It can free up federal land at no cost to developers for the construction of affordable housing.

"It can offset the capital costs of building affordable housing with grants or tax incentives.

"Clearly, there's no lack of ways for Ottawa to help." The key part is this: "What's been lacking until now has been the political will to act."

1650

If the honourable member for Don Valley East really wants to go after a government that has failed to do its fair share, perhaps he can start with his federal cousins in Ottawa. Past experience in Ontario has proven that governments do not build housing cost-effectively. In fact, the previous government's record in this area

borders on the abysmal, with hundreds and hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars disappearing into the black hole that was called the Ontario Housing Corp.

Furthermore, government's intrusion into this area is at best a disincentive to private sector construction. Throwing money at the problem has not resolved it. Rather, this approach used by past governments has only served to push this province further into debt. Excessive taxes and regulations imposed by previous governments have in part played a large role in creating the shortage of housing in our province.

We are working on better longer-term solutions for housing. We believe that the role of government is to foster an environment where new housing is created by the private sector, and we are continuing to remove barriers to building new rental housing.

I am proud of this government's record in dealing with the issue of affordable rental housing. Despite the opposition's posturing to the contrary, the Mike Harris government's record in this area, compared to those of the previous Liberal and NDP governments, is exemplary. I believe that Phil Dewan, of the Fair Rental Policy Organization, summed it up best when he said:

"The re-election of a Progressive Conservative majority government of Ontario is welcome news for the rental housing industry. With the Harris Tories ensconced at Queen's Park for another four years, the Tenant Protection Act, which has been in force for less than 12 months, will be given the time it needs to function effectively."

After that ringing endorsement from Mr Dewan, I want to congratulate him on his appointment as chief of staff to Liberal leader Dalton McGuinty. That's whom he works for now.

The motion on the floor today is unfounded and ill-conceived. I reiterate my opposition to it.

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): I'd like to talk about a housing problem and I'm going to suggest a solution. The problem is demolition and condo conversion. In the riding of St Paul's and across Toronto, and also in the city of Hamilton and other areas, there is a problem with respect to the demolition of apartments and the problem is this: There's a very low vacancy rate, for example, in Toronto—less than 1%. If we lower rental stock and the vacancy rate is less than 1%, there's nowhere for these people to go. So on Tweedsmuir and on St Clair and all over the city of Toronto, thousands of tenants are being affected by apartment demolitions in a rental market in which less than 1% of apartments are available to them. Where are they going to go? They can't go to the Royal York Hotel while the apartment is being converted, if it's being converted into condos. They're going to go out on to the streets. That's the problem.

The problem was caused because we had a change in law. The old law ensured that the city, the municipality, set the criteria for demolitions and conversions. It was part of the evolution of our housing laws. It began with legislation brought initially by the Bill Davis Tory government and evolved over the years to the point

where there was a set of criteria for apartment demolitions which looked at matters such as vacancy rates.

Then along came the Tenant Protection Act. The minister at the time guaranteed development. We were told there were going to be more apartments built. But rental stock, we now know, is going down, not up. The Anne Golden report, as the member for Don Valley East said, recommended that we never let the rental stock go down. At least as a matter of policy we never let laws or criteria sit on the books which will let rental stock go down; at least as a matter of policy, we never let laws or criteria sit on the books which will let rental stock go down. Yet that's exactly the situation we have right now. The city of Toronto cannot set the criteria for when there can be a demolition, as they could under the old law. The Ontario Municipal Board can only consider matters of zoning and density, and not matters of vacancy rates. They can't consider the fact that people who live in the buildings on Tweedsmuir and on St Clair, who are elderly and disabled, who have lived in these buildings for 25 years, have nowhere to go.

That's the problem. In such times we need a solution. What my colleague the housing critic, Mr Caplan, the member from Don Valley East, has proposed—we have sent a letter to the mayor of Toronto and we have asked Toronto city council to co-operate in passing a private bill which would create an exemption, at least for the city of Toronto, and if any other city wants to bring a private bill, then they can do the same thing, which ensures that the city gets back the powers to control criteria for apartment demolitions and condo conversions.

The motion has passed city council. It's been endorsed by the city. The bill is going to go before city council. It had unanimous approval before and it will have unanimous approval again. Then it will be before this House, and at that time the choice is going to be made: Is this government going to be part of the problem or part of the solution? Is this government going to recognize the flaw in the legislation and create the exemption, or is this government going to vote against it? Are they going to play politics, or are they going to tackle the issues? We look forward to what happens when this bill goes to committee.

Mr David Young (Willowdale): I want to thank my colleagues at the outset for splitting the time with me this afternoon. While I appreciate it, I don't have a great deal of time. There are some points that I wish to raise during this debate.

I want to begin this afternoon by clearing up some misconceptions, some inconsistencies, that appear to be held by some of the members opposite, particularly concerning this government's record on social housing.

In 1995, Mike Harris made a commitment to end the public housing boondoggle in this province, and let me say to you that that was a boondoggle that benefited big developers more than any other we have seen.

Under the Liberals and NDP, public housing was in a shambles. In 1995, government subsidies averaged nearly \$1,000 a month for a two-bedroom unit. Those watching

in this chamber and those watching across this province through television will understand how outrageous and unacceptable that is, and was.

The Provincial Auditor at the time said that the capital costs of buildings and of building these units were often far higher than the market value. In our first mandate, the government set about to fix a system that was clearly broken.

Taxpayers currently spend about \$1.5 billion every year to subsidize social housing. Taxpayers subsidize each non-profit unit to the tune of approximately \$10,000, each and every year. There are approximately 275,000 units of social housing in Ontario, and taxpayers must receive more value for that \$1.5 billion they spend each and every year.

We are committed to reforming and simplifying the social housing program. The social housing reform process that we have engaged in has involved various stakeholders: tenants, housing providers, municipalities and the province. A pause, Mr Speaker, to point out that municipalities in particular are very important participants in this program, and municipalities are understandably concerned with costs: capital repair costs, interest rate liability and so on and so forth.

1700

As well, providers are seeking greater autonomy and certainty in their funding arrangements. But before we continue social housing reform, we must have a new housing agreement, and this new housing agreement must involve the federal government. We want to make social housing cost-effective and responsive to the needs of our communities, but without all three levels of government at the table, that simply will not happen.

I appreciate the fact that those lawmakers in Ottawa who have a responsibility in this area, the Liberal Party, have appointed a minister to look into this matter. We're all appreciative of the fact that they are cognizant that this is a problem that needs to be addressed. Unfortunately, in spite of what might be the minister's good intentions, nothing, but nothing, has happened to advance this. Nothing. The federal minister of housing the homeless has travelled from coast to coast to investigate this problem, and while she's doing so she stays in five-star hotels. It's very nice.

And what has she concluded? We heard recently that she has concluded there is a problem. Well, Minister, with the greatest respect, we knew there was a problem. We knew this was a problem, and as soon as Anne Golden tabled her report, we came forward with some very tangible, very real solutions. We're still waiting for the federal government to come to the table. I'm hopeful they will be at the table shortly. There's a place for them; in fact, in reality, we cannot begin until they are there.

Social housing programs need to be simplified to make them easier to administer and better able to meet the needs of low-income families, and we've made significant progress in this regard. The foundation for a more streamlined, cost-effective and efficient social housing program exists.

Ontario's housing stock has been constructed under a variety of different programs over the years—Mr Speaker, you'd be familiar with that—and each had its own set of rules and different funding arrangements. The social housing stock is a valuable asset and the province has ensured that that particular stock has been well maintained and remains viable.

Our goal is one-window access to all social services, including social housing. By integrating these services at a local level, it will make it easier to make one system available for all the people who need it and who use it.

On January 1, 1998, we transferred the funding responsibility for social housing to municipalities as part of the local services realignment. On March 23 of this year, the province announced that \$50 million in savings will be used for the rent supplement program for low-income people. This initiative is entirely consistent with the promise we made to the people of Ontario in the Common Sense Revolution. That document said, "We will end the public housing boondoggle that profits only the large property developers and return to a shelter subsidy program for all Ontarians who need help in affording a decent level of shelter."

The people's money is better spent on people than on bricks and mortar and profit for developers. Shelter allowances can be an important means by which to deal with the affordability problem. Unfortunately, previous governments have tied up housing subsidies in new mortgages and expensive social housing. As a result, this money was not available to be allocated to a shelter allowance program without disrupting the existing housing programs and exposing the province to mortgage defaults.

As I indicated earlier, this is not a problem that can be easily resolved by any one level of government, and once the federal-provincial housing agreement has been finalized, the province will provide an additional 10,000 rent supplement units. That's very, very important, and I hope the federal government will assist us in this regard shortly.

Let me say in the short time I have remaining that this government clearly wants to state on the record that homelessness is a real and serious problem. Unlike Minister Bradshaw, who's still attempting to determine whether we have a problem and just how serious it is, and then how she'll deal with it one day, maybe, if her cabinet colleagues agree, we know there is a problem and we have reacted quickly. However, it's important to remember that it's a complex problem, and no one issue or one level of government will provide the solutions we need. Homelessness is a problem that will require long-term solutions and a multidisciplinary approach to the solution.

Homelessness requires all levels of government to work together. I want to say that this isn't just an urban issue; I've heard my friends on the other side talking about what happens in urban areas. It's an issue throughout Ontario. I am hopeful that the signing of the new social housing agreement that I referred to earlier in my

remarks this afternoon will enable Ontario to create a new \$50-million rent supplement program to provide accommodation for the 10,000 lower-income families and individuals who have been referred to.

I appreciate that I have very limited time left, but I want to say that under the program the rent supplement units will be allocated to municipalities on the basis of need. Three quarters of the units will be in existing rental buildings and one quarter of those units will be allocated to newly constructed rental buildings, because we now have a system in place, we now have a climate, where there will be new construction, and you heard some of my colleagues talk earlier about the phenomenal increase in new units. That will continue because of what we've done.

In addition, I want to say that we'll eliminate the impact of the PST on building materials used in construction of affordable, multi-residential rental units. That is one of many proposals we put forward. We put them forward earlier this year, immediately after Anne Golden tabled her report. They're still on the table. We're ready to take action in this regard.

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): Mr Speaker, before I start my remarks, I'd like to bring to the House's attention my nephew Ryan Clancy, in the gallery. He's here today as part of "Take Your Grade 9 Student to Work." This morning we were at Durham regional council and this afternoon, along with the Prime Minister, the Premier and the mayor of Toronto, attended an announcement about Toronto's waterfront. Based on my observations of his attendance here today, he probably will not be looking forward to politics as a career.

I am delighted to have a chance, however brief, to join in debate on the motion brought forward by my colleague the member for Don Valley East.

A lot of attention today has been focused on issues of rental housing protection, which are extremely important to me in my riding, which has the highest proportion of tenants of any riding in Ontario, some 78.3%. Later this year, in December, I will be representing tenants of 670 Parliament, 135 Rose Avenue and 99 Howard in their hearing before the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal. We participate on a daily basis trying to assist tenants in their dealings with landlords.

Today, however, in the brief time I have, I'd like to bring to the attention of this House the opportunities that exist for all of us to participate in and support practical measures on a personal basis to assist in the creation of housing stock.

Earlier in this debate the member for Etobicoke Centre, the Minister of Labour, mentioned that the government has made lands available to Habitat for Humanity. I wish to correct the record. Earlier, Nick Volk, who heads up Habitat for Humanity in Toronto, was here in the gallery. They have been working diligently with all levels of government in the Toronto area to try to get some land donated so they could, as a millennium pro-

ject, build 20 houses next year. These are houses targeted at the working poor.

So far, the government opposite has not offered any resources for that, and I encourage the Minister of Labour to take up the challenge I present to him today to work to find those lands for Habitat for Humanity.

I would also like to extend a challenge on a personal basis to all members of this House, and I will do so in writing later on. It's a challenge that I'm working on. The challenge includes finding volunteers, working with Habitat to raise funds to help get products for builds and to be physically involved in the builds that go on. Obviously, land is an important part of this. There are 14 chapters of Habitat for Humanity in Ontario, and it's growing. This is one practical measure that each of us can support in our own constituencies, so that working poor families can have housing, pay mortgages and get on with building better lives.

1710

I'd also like to draw to the House's attention the presence of three other members in the members' gallery, led by a guy named Kevin Parkes. Kevin Parkes is someone who grew up in Etobicoke Centre, as I did, someone I played hockey with, and someone I reconnected with during the most recent election campaign. At that time, Kevin Parkes was homeless and was living in a shelter system. More recently, along with his colleagues who are here today, they pooled their resources and created what I think is a model that all of us should work towards, a live-work housing model where they work on community economic development issues, where they join together their social assistance cheques to pay for rent. They've got themselves off the street. They're working on creating economic opportunities for themselves and they save the government money. Five people sharing one space costs much less than five people relying on shelter supports every single night.

The last thing on this practical basis that the government can do, that they can act on today if they meaningfully support creation of housing stock, is to look very carefully at the initiative that is before us in Regent Park, to redevelop a portion of Regent Park, increase densities, change the mix and improve the lives of people in that area.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr Marchese: Thank you, Speaker. It's good to have a friend in the Speaker's chair, because from time to time some Speakers are not too friendly to us.

I'm very happy to have this opportunity to speak to this resolution presented by the member from Don Valley East. I want to tell you as well, and tell the Liberals, that I'm going to be gracious and somewhat kind, if I can, because the member from St Paul's lives in my riding and I'm a bit afraid that he won't take my sign in the next election. I don't want to hurt them in any way that might jeopardize that close relationship we have with each other, so I'm going to be kind. So when you hear the

word "Liberal," I'm not trying to hurt them, I'm just trying to point out some facts.

Mr Speaker, do you remember mon ami M. Leach? I miss him here. I do and I was thinking of him when I thought about what I might say. I just want to draw your attention to a quote of his because I learned so much from him. He vowed, "The Tenant Protection Act would spur developers to begin building 10,000 new rental units in two years." He vowed that he would do that. "The whole purpose of this is to get more units built so that the tenants can have a choice." That's mon ami M. Leach saying that.

Two years have passed. There is little choice in Toronto's rental market and almost nothing being built. In fact, according to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp, a mere 167 rental units were added to the city's stock last year and another 119 in the first eight months of this year. We have a millennial housing disaster on our hands as we speak. Then you hear the retorts by the government members: "Here are the facts. The opposition says this. We present the facts."

What worries me is that they never once admit or acknowledge that perhaps we might be having a problem and we're struggling to solve it. That's what hurts me and I'm sure hurts people like Cathy Crowe, a public health nurse, who are out on the streets every day, and more so in the winter months but generally throughout the whole year, trying to deal with the homeless in the city of Toronto. It must hurt people like her to listen to Tory members say, "Here are the facts." Well, I just presented some facts and I've got more facts that I want to present to this discussion.

This is another point that I want to make that's drawn from Taking Responsibility for Homelessness: An Action Plan for Toronto. It's quite weighty; they've done a good study. In the introduction to chapter 1 they say, "The homeless population in Toronto is on the rise. More people are living in the streets and using shelters. In 1996, almost 26,000 different people used the shelter system in Toronto. There is rising pressure on drop-ins, food banks and other emergency services. The number of evictions is increasing," contrary to the so-called facts presented by the member for Scarborough Southwest. "Waiting lists for social housing are getting longer. As of June 1998, more than 100,000 people were waiting for social housing."

When the Conservative members speak to this issue, they need to be less ideological and more sensitive to the facts that are presented by people who have helped to develop reports of this kind. Because it isn't just responding to an opposition member who in their view is speaking ideological things that can be refuted by the mere fact of saying, "Here are the facts." They really have to try to respond to these types of reports, that speak to the crisis we have in housing—homelessness not just as a city disaster, but as a national disaster.

I want to draw your attention as well, and the attention of the Conservative members that might be listening, to a report done by the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Associ-

ation and the Cooperative Housing Federation of Canada. They did a report called *Where's Home?* about six to eight months ago, and they have an update on that report which I want to read on the record very shortly. This report is a picture of housing needs in Ontario, and it isn't done by politicians; it isn't drafted by a New Democrat. It's drafted by people who have housing expertise and who are trying to find a solution to the problems, but first they identify what the problems are.

I want to quote from a report which is still draft—tomorrow they're doing a conference on this matter. It's a sequel to the other report that I just showed. It's *Where's Home?*, part 2. I will read the conclusions and summary, from which I will make some comments afterwards. I want to do that so that the comments that are raised through this report hopefully will appear in their minds, if not the audience, that it's drawn from factual information done by studies by people who are neutral in this regard. The Tory members might want to refute it, but these are the facts.

Conclusions from *Where's Home?* and *Where's Home?* part 2—they tell it so I might as well just read it.

“Every part of the province is affected by the deteriorating situation for tenants.

“It is not just Toronto, or the big cities, where the affordable housing situation for tenants has deteriorated.

“Data from 21 Ontario municipalities”—you remember they studied eight cities before, and now they did the other cities and municipalities—“covering the last 10 years demonstrates that hundreds of thousands of Ontario tenants are suffering, and prospects are likely to worsen unless the provincial and federal governments act.

“Rents are increasing faster than the rate of inflation in almost all of the 21 municipalities, and with the partial decontrol of rents by the provincial government in 1998, rent increases may accelerate at an even faster rate.

“Muskoka, North Bay, Owen Sound, Barrie and Sudbury have some of the highest rates of rent increases, in company with Toronto.

“Many municipalities have serious rental housing shortages, with declining vacancy rates.

“Among those with shortages, Barrie, Guelph, Kitchener-Waterloo, Durham, Peel and Toronto have extremely low vacancy rates.

“Affordability problems for tenants are severe, and getting worse everywhere.

“Almost half of all Ontario tenants cannot afford their rents”—half of them, 3.3 million tenants, have an affordability problem—“and the rate of tenants with affordability problems has jumped in every one of the 21 municipalities based on the last census taken in 1996.

1720

“Places such as Peterborough, Kingston, Sudbury, North Bay, Owen Sound, Sarnia and Muskoka have among the highest rates of tenants paying 30% or more of their household income on rent.

“Almost one in four tenants in Ontario”—that is, a little more than 300,000 households—“is considered to be at potential risk of homelessness because they are

paying a staggering 50% or more of their combined household incomes on rent.” That is staggering.

“Peterborough and Kingston exceed even Toronto's rate of tenants at risk of homelessness.

“The trend line in Ontario for tenants with affordability problems has increased relentlessly over the last four census periods, with the most dramatic jump found in the 1996 census.

“The 1996 census recorded a decline in Ontario rent incomes of 4% from the 1991 report.

“The market is not responding to needs; almost no new rental housing is being built.

“In 1997 and 1998, only 2% of all housing starts in Ontario were for rental housing.” That's all.

“The average proportion of rental housing starts in Ontario in the first half of the decade was 27%.

“With the federal government's cancellation of funding for new assisted housing in 1993, and a similar cancellation by Ontario”—meaning them—“in 1995, no new assisted housing has been built in the province for several years.

“The lack of new rental housing construction will create even more serious shortages (with accompanying increases in rents) in the near future.

“A Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp report projects a need of 80,000 new rental units in Ontario over the 1996-2001 period, during which time only 6,000 rental units are likely to be built.” So far, only about 3,000 units have been built.

With a projected need of 80,000 new rental units from 1996 to 2001, you can see the—I have a graph here. I'm not sure the camera will be able to catch it, but this is the projected housing need—80,000 by the year 2001. Only 3,000 units have so far been built, with a projected housing construction of 6,000 units, more or less, by 2001. The need is reported to be 80,000 units. This is a report done by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp.

Ms Martel: M. Leach was wrong.

Mr Marchese: M. Leach was dead wrong, poor fellow. God bless, wherever he is; a board member of Lavalin, I'm sure he's doing okay.

“Making a bad situation worse is the growing trend to demolition of existing rental housing or its conversion to condominiums; this is expected to accelerate with the termination by Ontario in 1998 of legislation which gave municipalities powers to protect rental housing.

“The Ontario and federal governments must act now,” they say, “and provide new funding programs.

“The attempts made by both senior levels of government earlier in the 1990s to walk away from their responsibility for funding affordable housing have seriously added to the growing problems for Ontario tenants.

“Significant new funding for affordable housing must be made a priority by both Queen's Park and Ottawa, recognizing that municipalities cannot possibly make a serious dent in the need for affordable housing alone.

“There is a clear role for the province in creating new affordable housing, as well as looking to their policies

and legislation which are currently making the situation worse for tenants in existing rental housing.

"Federal and provincial homeless initiatives must be accompanied by broader affordable housing action if they are to have a lasting impact."

I read that for the record as a way of saying we have a national housing disaster on our hands, and it will not do to have glib responses from Tories that make it appear that they have solved the problem or are solving it, and it will not do for members like the member for Carleton-Gloucester to simply say, "The old system was dysfunctional and we're just fixing it." It will not do.

It will not do to simply say the culprit was maximum rents. It will not do. You can hide behind it. I know that is one of the things you want to try to pin on other governments as the causal connection to our housing problem, but you simply won't get away with it. You will look foolish. In the minds of those who are intelligent social activists and suffering the problem of housing, you will not look very intelligent in your responses.

So I urge government members to try to be a little more sensitive and responsive to the need. By merely attacking other governments, you are not escaping your social obligation. You will be made accountable; it's just a question of time.

This housing shortage affects millions of people, threatens 50% of the population, 3.3 million who are having an affordability problem and who eventually will leave those places or be forced out. They will cause a social problem that you as government—as non-government government—may have to respond to soon or later. Reminding you that projects take anywhere from three to six years to build, even if you start now you will not even be able to make a dent in the housing disaster we have on our hands.

This report I read to you calls for an urgent need for you as a government to respond, and they're calling upon the federal Liberal government to respond.

I am saddened by the fact that M. Martin, the federal Finance Minister, co-authored a report in 1991 with a colleague of his, and they talked about having a national housing strategy, a national housing policy. By 1993, when they got elected, they threw that report out the window. And not only that; they have devolved housing responsibilities to the provinces and territories.

You, the federal government, cannot abandon tenants, homeless people, people who have an affordability problem and people who are looking for decent, affordable housing. You, the federal Liberal government, cannot abandon those social needs. You cannot on one hand say, "We care, we have a heart," and on the other hand do nothing. You cannot. It is illegitimate for you to have a \$21-billion surplus and not put one cent into housing. You cannot.

So I urge my opposition colleagues in the Liberal Party to urge their federal members to get the federal government to do something, to release some dollars for housing. It's the least you can do.

We in the opposition are all talking about housing. We all recognize we need it. But you, more than I, have more power to influence federal Liberals. So if you are lobbying them, please show it. If you are writing them to urge them to do something on the housing front, please show us so we know that you're doing something. But it will not do to simply say, "We at the provincial level care, and they are at the federal level. We have no responsibility in that regard." You're independent members, yes. You are here as independent Liberal members. I urge you to support the call for taking responsibility for homelessness and taking responsibility for our housing shortage in order to be able to deal with this disaster across Ontario and across Canada. That's my urgent appeal to them.

1730

With respect to the other matters that have been raised about tenants, we dealt with that yesterday. I asked a question. I asked the Premier, who then turned it over to his housing minister, to deal with some of the problems that were raised by the Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation.

Two problems were highlighted. The eviction forms are often unclear, often are not delivered to the tenant and sometimes are downright fraudulent, was the point that I made. If they're not delivered by the landlord and even if they are delivered, it's still a problem, because there's confusion. Because of linguistic differences or linguistic difficulties, some people do not understand that they're about to be evicted. Once served with a notice, you've got five days to respond. If you do not respond, you're out.

The urgent appeal I made to the Premier, because it is within his control, was to instruct the tribunal to make sure they send the notice out to the tenants. Don't leave that responsibility to the landlords. Some landlords are good folk, no doubt, but many landlords are not. What we want to deal with is a matter of having a landlord who's not as decent as we would like and therefore urging the tribunal to send that notice of eviction with some clarity so people can defend themselves. That was one request that I had made.

The other request was that five days of appeal notice is completely inadequate. The Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation said it should be 14 days, and we agree. They are reasonable requests. I can't for the life of me understand why this government simply cannot, through the common sense that they claim to have, simply respond to common sense suggestions made by people who are working with those who are very vulnerable.

I urge this government to be a little more sensitive, to have some foresight to the disaster we have at the moment and the disaster we are about to face. I urge my provincial Liberal opposition colleagues to urge their federal Liberal members that action needs to be taken now. If they don't act now, if the federal government doesn't release money, this provincial government will simply shirk from their responsibility.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): There is a crisis in supportive housing that this government must address. Young people with handicaps are being sentenced to a life of wasted opportunities by a government too obsessed with ridding the streets of squeegee kids to take responsibility for disabled kids.

To illustrate the seriousness of this problem, I'm going to speak to you about the case of Danielle Harder, a young woman with cerebral palsy. Dani has lived in the Bloorview McMillan Centre for most of her life. She lacks control of her arms and legs, is non-verbal and requires attendant care on a 24-hour basis. Dani is bright, insightful and very lively. Dani enjoys a rich social life and undertakes volunteer work.

At 25, Dani is too old to remain at the youth-oriented Bloorview. For the past nine years, Ms Harder and her family have been attempting to secure a home for her. More than 30 different possible homes have been explored. Most have waiting lists as long as your arm. The others have turned her away because she requires more care than they can provide. The government's senseless solution to the lack of space is to find a place for Dani in a seniors' chronic care facility.

If Dani were placed in such a facility, her life would be compromised. This is a vibrant, lovely young woman with her entire life ahead of her. However, her roommates would be seniors requiring chronic care. Rather than spending the next 50 years in a seniors' home, Dani should live in an apartment-style group home with her peers.

This type of arrangement would not only serve Dani better, it would save money within the first year. A cost analysis has shown that a new facility can be developed at a net saving when compared to the government's plan of placing Dani in a chronic care facility.

The problem is housing. With the government abdicating its responsibility for housing, it's almost impossible for Dani's group, Partners for Meaningful Living, to raise the money required to purchase and retrofit an appropriate facility. All they need is a crumb of capital funding to get this project off the ground.

Instead, the government of Ontario has ignored Dani Harder for nine years. Her issue was first raised in 1990, and through five years of NDP rule and four years of Conservative rule nothing has been done. My office knows of 10 instances like this in Toronto alone and there are likely hundreds more, across this province, individuals locked into retirement facilities.

Each minister who could take responsibility is ducking for cover. The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care passes the buck to the Minister of Consumer and Social Relations, who passes the buck to housing, who passes the buck to health and long-term care. Even the Premier has gotten into the passing-the-buck game.

Will one current minister accept responsibility for this issue and work for Dani's group to develop new facilities for severely disabled young people to live in? Will one minister accept the responsibility for supportive housing and stop the duplication of bureaucracy that is sucking

valuable resources out of the system? Will one minister at least answer the letters from Dani's mother, Karen, that were forwarded to them by the Premier?

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): It is with some regret that I join this debate today put forward on a very important matter. I want to thank first my colleague from Don Valley East for his ardent advocacy for tenants. I think he shares my incredulity that the government today, when given an opportunity to come to terms with its abandonment of tenants, with its broken election promise to tenants in the issue of maximum rents, chose instead to run a comic opera around some other kind of commentary altogether than to deal with the people—some of whom are here in the gallery today—whose lives have been affected.

Two days ago we had a little play put on by the member from Scarborough Southwest, talking about years and years ago. Two days ago, under the term of this government, with these caucus members who are glued to their seats, not doing anything on behalf of their own tenants, the people living in West Lodge apartments had increases applied on an average of 38%.

What that means, done by this Conservative government, is that Sukrani Looknauth had her rent increased from \$494 to \$683, leaving her \$146 for everything else. What fair-minded people out there might ask is, "What does Sukrani or any of those 720 families get in return?" The answer is absolutely nothing, and in fact worse.

Under the Tory-arranged rules there is no longer protection, as there was before June 1998, that if a building was in disrepair, you couldn't grab an increase in rent, let alone one of 38% or the maximum that we're seeing here, 50%, but you can now. You can under these Tories. You can under the people who have become the party of greed, the party that can't stand up for little people but instead has to side with big business each and every time, even with something as egregious as a 38% increase that leaves somebody \$140 to live on. That is the direct result of regulations and laws put in force by this government.

I think people across the province who are fair-minded are shocked to understand that this is a government that will stand idly by to see 720 families, 2,000 people, put in a state of absolute misery as a result of this government's actions.

The landlords in those buildings are the only people who stand to benefit because 82% of these tenants are forced to deal with a lack of elevator service—

Interjection.

Mr Kennedy: —76%, which the member opposite seems to find a bit amusing, have cockroaches in their apartments; 73% have mice in their apartments, and for that privilege of mice, of cockroaches—

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey): No one believes you.

Mr Kennedy: We hear a member opposite making noise: the member from Bruce-Grey perhaps talking about his own subsidized apartment which is immune to these problems. Each member in this House who has a

subsidized apartment, and the majority of the members opposite have subsidized apartments paid for by the state—will they actually deal with the issue at hand? They won't.

1740

I want to tell you, it's very simple. The people at Triller Avenue, the courageous people at West Lodge represented here by Anna Thacker, who's the head of the tenants' association, see the behaviour of this House. They see these members who will be asked to make a recorded vote. We see the people who will stand up for a legal stickup, for gouging of people, who will not stand up and use their legal ability to act to defend these people, who will not stand up for these people because they simply have lost touch with the needs of average people, hard-working people, people who are working for below minimum wage, people with disabilities, people whose rent has gone up as much as \$284 and yet 45% of them have sinks that don't work and there are messes in the hallways. The front doors of a complex with 720 families in it, that your government approves a 38% increase for, aren't even locked.

The members sit in their places in this House and claim to be legislators in the public interest, and they can't bend this much. They can't accommodate getting rid of the maximum rent that is ruining people's lives.

I want to commend my colleague, because the members opposite for some reason can't do their duty and he's helping this House come to terms with this problem.

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): In speaking to this motion, I want to focus on a particular aspect of the affordable housing issue that is of special concern to me, that of student housing.

In the recent throne speech, this government talked about real people. I want to talk about real people too, the real people who represent our best investment and hope for a prosperous future in this province, the real people who are entering colleges and universities and facing unacceptable challenges because of this government's continuous attack on affordable housing and tenants, its elimination of rent controls through the Tenant Protection Act, an ironic title if I ever heard one.

Let me tell you about real people, then, and outline for the members some of the experiences they're enduring as they deal with the reality of this government's policies.

Kathy: She had all the stress of a regular student going away for the first time. In her own words, she says:

"I had all that stress ... plus some more. What I didn't have was a destination. After months of searching, I didn't have a home to go to. Neither did the three others who were coming with me to Toronto.

"Leaving London, Ontario, and the others behind, I packed a suitcase and started my journey of jumping around from friends' to friends' to strangers' places. At the same time, I began school.

"My friends and I started searching for a house in late July. There were only a few nice houses for reasonable prices.... Being a student didn't give me an advantage

over those families and professionals who had also applied.

"So here I was in an uncomfortable situation of having to stay at others' places, inconveniencing them. I slept on living room couches and lived out of suitcases.

"Also, when I had to get into these places"—such as residences—"I had to drag people downstairs to sign me in....

"All of the local hostels were full.... I was thankful to those who took me in. What did other students who didn't have places to stay do?

"After lugging my suitcase around from five different places, we finally moved into our own place on September 27....

"I am now ready to start school. It's too bad I had four weeks of reading to catch up on while unpacking."

Tyler, another student, "a first-year student who drives two hours each way to get to school, never thought he would have a problem getting into residence at Ryerson.

"He was wrong.

"The applied computer science student from Whitby was looking forward to experiencing residence life when he applied" to residence "in December.

"Instead ... he was ranked between 61st and 111th on a waiting list for Ryerson ... residences.

"Now living at home, he has to leave at 5:45 am to make an 8 am class. He doesn't get home until 7 pm and is in bed by 9 so he can get up early enough to start the process again.

"Social life? Forget it.

"He's not expecting to be accepted into residence any time soon.... He's one of more than 200 students who were denied a spot"—first-year students.

As well, a student from Sault Ste Marie was 200th on a list and is now living in a co-op housing residence and had to pay nearly \$400 to be bumped to the top of its 300-person waiting list. "Ryerson's residence shortage is part of a larger crisis in affordable housing in Toronto brought on by the Ontario government."

Lest the government think that these examples are unique to Toronto, let me assure you that these stresses and hardships facing these young people are common across the province.

Let me share one last case, and that is of a Waterloo student who was living away from home for the first time and could not find a place in residence. She has to travel on two buses to go to the University of Waterloo every day. Her parents are worried. "Our goal is to find accommodation for our daughter," her father said. However, the local vacancy rate is less than 1.5%.

The bottom line is that this government preaches about the value of real people out of one side of its mouth and promises a quality post-secondary experience, then allows, through indifference, our youth to experience not quality but a nightmare as they begin their college or university life.

I strongly support this motion and urge all members to do so.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I'm pleased to join the debate and congratulate my colleague from Don Valley East for bringing forward a very reasonable, thoughtful resolution here that clearly speaks to the problems that we're having in regard to tenants and affordability in this province. I know my colleague from Don Valley East has always been a strong advocate of tenants in his own riding and across this province, and this resolution fits in with that clearly.

There's a clear difference between that side of the House and this side of the House. That side of the House believes that the issue of rent controls of rental units is in the interests of the developers. Today, we clearly saw where your priorities are. Your priorities are with the developers in this province.

On this side of the House, in the Liberal caucus, we believe very much that as legislators our job and responsibility is to protect tenants. Certainly what you have done with your legislation—we're starting to see the horror stories. We heard my colleagues today talk about seniors, students and low-income tenants who have been trapped in their apartments, who now are in a situation where they no longer can afford decent, reasonable, clean rental accommodation.

This legislation you've brought in has not worked. It has continued to enrich the pockets of developers at the expense of average, hard-working, low-income, disabled, poor and senior Ontarians. Every sector has been affected by your changes.

In my own riding of Hamilton East, Mr Speaker, where one out of every three residents is a tenant, we have seen the impact. I've seen senior citizens who are afraid to move out of conditions that have deteriorated because they're afraid of what they're going to have to move into as a result of your policy that is there to protect your friends.

We have seen disabled individuals on fixed incomes who live in conditions that they should not be living in, but they don't dare look for something else because as soon as they try to find another apartment unit we know what's going to happen. They are going to be simply held for ransom by the owner and be charged whatever the owner wants to charge whether these folks can afford it or not.

As it affects the seniors, this has become a Tory version of elder abuse. Really, that's what you're inflicting on senior citizens across this province. You're making tenant senior citizens prisoners in their own homes. What you're doing, very clearly, in order to protect your rich and powerful friends, is screwing most average Ontarians who use rental accommodation and who should be protected by government, not shafted by government.

I ask the members across the floor to take off their blinders for a second, put away the party ideology for a second and think of the tenants in your riding who are affected by this legislation.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): Point of order. I have a question for the Speaker. The member

opposite used a term which I would consider unparliamentary: the word "screwing."

The Acting Speaker: That's not a point of order. Continue.

Mr Agostino: They were screwed, referring to how this government has treated senior citizens across this province. I stand by that comment and I would ask these members across the floor—I understand my colleagues get rattled, because maybe you're feeling guilty about how this affects senior citizens. Maybe there's a touch of conscience here, how this is affecting vulnerable people. Probably not, because you have brought in this harmful, cruel policy of tenant gouging that is going to impact, and has impacted, every single tenant. It doesn't impact your rich friends who own condos but it impacts average Ontarians.

I say to this government, take off your blinders and think of the people in your riding who are affected. Do the right thing tonight. Vote in favour of the resolution, which will go a way towards dealing with this problem, towards convincing the Premier and your government that what you are doing to senior citizens, to disabled, to people who are vulnerable in this province, is immoral and is wrong.

1750

Mr Kennedy: Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order. In the context of my remarks we had a number of the Tory members sitting laughing opposite, and one of them, the member for Bruce-Grey, challenged and said that he did not believe the fact that somebody had received an increase of \$189. That woman was sitting in the audience. She has sent a copy of her increase where she has had to pull \$189 out of her pocket because of you—

The Acting Speaker: That's not a point of order.

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): On the same point of order: I was sitting beside the member for Bruce-Grey throughout the time that you were indicating he made certain statements. He did not say that. He said nothing of the sort. I would ask you to withdraw a completely inaccurate statement.

The Acting Speaker: I ruled that was not a point of order so we will not continue further debate on this issue.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: Earlier today the honourable member for Eglinton-Lawrence asked me a question and I did want to correct the record because I've done some further research about this issue. I wanted to make sure that I was completely clear and factual. The contact with whom I had a conversation, who I understand was representing Jay-M Holdings, was not Mr Diamond. I apologize to the honourable member. My memory was faulty. It's a gentleman by the name of Mr Duffy, who is a planning consultant. So at no time have I spoken to Mr Diamond.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Caplan has moved opposition day motion number 1. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."
 All those opposed will say "nay."
 In my opinion, the nays have it.
 Call in the members; this will be a 10-minute bell.
The division bells rang from 1753 to 1803.

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

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Colle, Mike	Marchese, Rosario
Bartolucci, Rick	Crozier, Bruce	Martel, Shelley
Bisson, Gilles	Di Cocco, Caroline	McLeod, Lyn
Bountrogianni, Marie	Dombrowsky, Leona	Patten, Richard
Boyer, Claudette	Duncan, Dwight	Peters, Steve
Bradley, James J.	Gerretsen, John	Ramsay, David
Brown, Michael A.	Gravelle, Michael	Ruprecht, Tony
Bryant, Michael	Kennedy, Gerard	Sergio, Mario
Caplan, David	Kwinter, Monte	Smitherman, George
Christopherson, David	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hastings, John	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Baird, John R.	Hodgson, Chris	Runciman, Robert W.
Barrett, Toby	Jackson, Cameron	Sampson, Rob
Chudleigh, Ted	Johns, Helen	Skarica, Toni
Clark, Brad	Johnson, Bert	Snobelen, John
Clement, Tony	Kells, Morley	Spina, Joseph
Coburn, Brian	Klees, Frank	Sterling, Norman W.
Cunningham, Dianne	Marland, Margaret	Stockwell, Chris
DeFaria, Carl	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tilson, David
Dunlop, Garfield	Maves, Bart	Tsubouchi, David H.
Ecker, Janet	Mazzilli, Frank	Turnbull, David
Eves, Ernie L.	Molinari, Tina R.	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Flaherty, Jim	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim
Galt, Doug	Murdoch, Bill	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gill, Raminder	Newman, Dan	Wood, Bob
Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John	Young, David

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 29; the nays are 48.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost. It being past 6 of the clock, this House will adjourn until 10 of the clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1805.

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