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of Ontario
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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 9 May 2001

Mercredi 9 mai 2001

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 9 May 2001

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 9 mai 2001

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NURSING WEEK

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): On Monday of this week I had the opportunity to participate in the kickoff of Nursing Week in my riding, organized by Ruth Pollock and Ruth Pigeon. I was pleased to be able to participate, to highlight the hard work and dedication of the nurses in my riding and across Canada.

My daughter happens to be one of those nurses, and I have watched how the workload has increased due to drastic cuts to the health care system. It is time the Harris government realized what the nurses are going through and tried to eliminate some of these problems.

Cuts in the health care system have created shortages not only in nursing but also in hospital beds, emergency room services and waits for surgery. In my riding there are patients who have to wait for crucial MRIs, health care, and I could go on.

But one of the most important issues is the fight for kidney dialysis. Over the years, I have spoken many times in this House to the lack of dialysis in my riding. Our bid to get dialysis up and running was successful, but there are still 17 patients who have to travel to Brockville, Kingston and Ottawa for this life-saving health care.

Coincidentally, the government has the money and the resources to provide the additional funds. It's time that the Ministry of Health, the stakeholders and the health care workers solve this important situation so that these dialysis patients can be treated closer to home.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): This morning, once again, New Democrats stood side by side, shoulder to shoulder, arm in arm with working women and men here in Ontario. On behalf of the NDP caucus at Queen's Park and New Democrats across Ontario, I joined members of CEP Local 593, representing some 600 workers here in Ontario, with another 300 across the country. These people work for Petro-Canada.

Petro-Canada has forced these workers to strike to obtain some modest level of fairness in pension benefits. Petro-Canada—hugely profitable; indeed showing almost

a 2000% increase in profits in the first quarter of this year—denies these workers their fair share in terms of pension benefits.

Petro-Canada as well has been particularly cruel, to the point of firing the daughter of one of these striking workers, who had already been granted a contract as a co-op student, being that Petro-Canada is part of her work placement.

You see, it's not enough just to talk about working families; you've got to stand with them. You've got to stand with them on the picket lines when they're fighting for economic and social justice.

As well, New Democrats wholeheartedly support the call of these CEP Local 539 workers for a boycott of Petro-Canada fuels and products. The fact is, Petro-Canada gasoline is scab gasoline. Nobody in this province should be putting scab gasoline in their cars, trucks or SUVs. We shouldn't be buying scab gasoline. Say no to Petro-Canada. Stop buying Petro-Canada gas.

EVENTS IN CAMBRIDGE

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): Saturday, May 5, was a special day in my riding of Cambridge. The Cambridge Centre for the Arts held its eagerly anticipated grand opening, with potters, poets, musicians, dancers, artists and writers from across the community energizing the day-long celebration. For Cambridge Arts Guild members Sara Dailley, Devon Henderson, Roger Howell, Helen Fowler, Robert Kastner, Pat Rideout-Rosenberg, Diana Watson, Graham Scott and Dr. Tom Samolczyk, this was a dream come true. After three years of hard work, this community initiative, spearheaded by the chair, Jill Summerhayes, has become a reality.

The Cambridge Arts Guild raised \$500,000 through corporate and private donations toward the renovation of this Cambridge landmark, a former PUC building opened by Sir Adam Beck in 1922. Both the provincial and federal governments worked with the city of Cambridge, led by my good friend and former mayor Jane Brewer, and private partners such as Toyota Motor Manufacturing Canada and others, to renovate this impressive \$2.5-million facility.

Cambridge families will now have access to this 19,000-square-foot centre, comprised of studios, workshops, classrooms and meeting space. It is truly a great addition to the fabric of our community and will be enjoyed by many.

Thank you to everyone involved in this very important community project on behalf of Cambridge families.

TAXATION

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): The ideologically driven Harris government has shown it is not capable of managing the affairs of this province. Working families who pay taxes expect their dollars to go toward protecting the water they drink and the air they breathe. They expect their valuable tax dollars to be put toward investment in primary, secondary and post-secondary education. They expect quality health care.

We on this side of the House understand that these services must be provided in an effective manner and with good fiscal management. We know that today the government is going to reduce corporate tax to be 25% less than US jurisdictions. We are already highly competitive with the US, and more importantly, it makes bad economic sense, particularly in an economic downturn. This unnecessary tax cut will cost us \$2.4 billion a year in lost revenue.

What is absolutely absurd is that community care services in Sarnia-Lambton are so strapped for money that home care providers have been asked to take five to 10 minutes from patient care to cut costs for travel time between patients. Why do we have money for unnecessary tax cuts when we are nickel-and-diming essential services in this province?

WASTE REDUCTION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Across the province of Ontario there are many positive examples of what can be achieved when we all work together. My riding of Durham is but one fine example.

I'm proud to announce that on April 19 the municipality of Clarington received its second straight silver medal for the Ontario Waste Minimization Award, given out to municipalities by the Recycling Council of Ontario. On hand to accept the award on behalf of the municipality of Clarington were public works director Stephen Vokes, as well as Sue Arends and Fred Horvath. For 2000, the merits used to determine the winners in each of the different categories—platinum, gold, silver and bronze—were overall present practices as well as waste management policies over the last three years.

The silver award was given to just seven municipalities that generated between 151 and 215 kilograms per capita, a 30% residential waste reduction from the estimated provincial average. I should also mention that Durham region was awarded a bronze for a 20% reduction.

I've said in the House before that young people in Durham also have a strong interest in the environment. Today a group of students from Courtice Secondary School of the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board begins competition at a province-wide event called the Envirothon, which will wrap up on May 12. Under the direction of teacher John Howden, Courtice students Lucie Mussakowski, Carl Pokorski, Ashling Amato, Virginia Ervin and Jay Hutton will compete against other

students across the province on environmental trivia as well as the presentation components on this issue.

I am proud of the accomplishments not just of the students, but of all of my riding of Durham. We feel very strongly about protecting our environment.

1340

MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGER

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): It's been a year since the long and successful fight to keep the Henderson hospital open on Hamilton Mountain, the only acute care hospital on the mountain. Over 250,000 Hamilton residents are served by this hospital, and it is the host hospital to the cancer centre, a world-renowned cancer centre.

It's been two years since the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care made initial approval for an MRI at the hospital. The hospital is waiting for final approval before calling for tenders for the building which will store the MRI.

The MRI is waiting in Germany to be shipped to Hamilton. The Henderson cannot accept delivery before it receives final government approval for the MRI building. The delay from the government means it could be 2002 before the new state-of-the-art diagnostic unit begins to scan patients. The MRI unit may even be stored in Winnipeg, at great storage costs, if approval doesn't come soon.

Hamilton Health Sciences Corp has raised \$2.5 million to pay for the system, and all documentation has been forwarded to the ministry since July.

The current waiting list for the MRI in my community is six months. Imagine waiting for six months before knowing your diagnosis. The new system will drop the wait to two months.

The Henderson MRI will serve patients from across south-central and western Ontario. It will make the now challenging recruitment of doctors easier.

I've called the minister's office, I've sent a letter and have not received a response—surprise, surprise. I have one question: why the delay? Do the right thing. You promised. Sign the papers. People's lives are at stake.

ITER FUSION PROJECT

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I rise in the House today to urge the federal government to support Ontario's bid for the international ITER fusion project.

Fusion, the process of joining atoms to release energy, is fuelled by tritium, the waste produced by OPG nuclear operations. Fusion is a sustainable energy source which produces minimal amounts of radioactive waste and no greenhouse gases.

However, the federal government has not yet submitted Canada's proposal. Let's hope that somewhere in the federal government's recently announced \$750 million for research and development, they can find money to support this project. The benefits are indeed enormous:

1,000 to 1,500 construction jobs; \$6 billion in capital costs to build in Ontario; 300 scientists; 400 support staff; another \$6 billion required for operations. At its peak, total jobs created: 3,500, with an increase to Ontario's GDP of \$5.2 billion.

We have the existing site infrastructure in Clarington. There will be no transportation of tritium required. We are an internationally neutral site and we have favourable socio-economic conditions.

We are confident that Canada can win the bid to host the international ITER fusion energy project here in Ontario, and we urge the federal government to submit Canada's proposal now.

ORDRE DE LA PLÉIAIDE

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell) : À titre de président de la section ontarienne de l'Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie et au nom de mes collègues de l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario, il me fait un grand plaisir de souhaiter la bienvenue à huit des 10 personnes, ici présentes dans la tribune du Président, qui recevront l'Ordre de la Pléiade ce soir.

Les personnes qui seront décorées sont l'honorable René Marin, M. Paul Chauvin, le D^r Jérôme Corbeil, M^{me} Ethel Côté, M^{me} Tréva Legault-Cousineau, M. Caroll Jacques, M. Gilles-Mathias Pagé, l'honorable Chris Stockwell, et M^e Pierre Gravelle et M. Pierre de Blois, qui seront aussi honorés ce soir mais qui sont absents pour le moment.

La Pléiade est l'Ordre de la Francophonie et du dialogue des cultures de l'Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie. Depuis la fondation de la section ontarienne en 1988, 19 personnages ont été honorés, dont nos anciens premiers ministres David Peterson et Bob Rae, l'ancien procureur général Roy McMurtry, ainsi que Claudette Boyer, députée d'Ottawa-Vanier.

Tous les récipiendaires de cette prestigieuse médaille ont su nous démontrer l'importance de préserver notre langue, de jouir de notre héritage culturel et de vivre avec fierté dans une si belle province qui déborde de richesses culturelles.

J'invite mes collègues de l'Assemblée législative à se joindre à moi pour accueillir chaleureusement nos invités d'honneur qui sont parmi nous. I invite my colleagues in the Legislature to join me in welcoming our special guests who are with us today.

Bon séjour à Queen's Park.

THORNHILL RATTLERS

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): Tonight the attention of hundreds of thousands of Ontarians will be on New Jersey, where the Toronto Maple Leafs play game seven against the New Jersey Devils, and on Philadelphia, where the Toronto Raptors play game two against the Philadelphia 76ers.

Residents in Thornhill, however, are following an extra team: the Thornhill Rattlers. The Rattlers are

representing the central region of Canada in competition for the Royal Bank Cup, Canada's national Junior A hockey championship. They face stiff competition in the Camrose Kodiaks, the Weyburn Red Wings, les Panthères de St-Jerome, and the host Flin Flon Bombers.

The teams started round-robin play on May 5 and continue to May 10. The top four teams will advance to semi-final play on May 12, with the gold medal game to be held on May 13 and televised nationally. This evening, the Rattlers will look for their first win of the tournament against host team Flin Flon Bombers.

Tonight, while you cheer for Mats Sundin, for Vince Carter, and for Curtis Joseph, make sure you take some time to think about people like Jason Chrapala, the Rattlers' goalie. When you marvel at professional coaches like Pat Quinn and Lenny Wilkens, think about Frank Carnevale, the Rattlers' coach and general manager. Coach Carnevale and the rest of his staff vowed to last year's Rattlers team that they would have a chance to play for the national championship.

On behalf of Thornhill residents, I wish the Rattlers the best of luck in Manitoba.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the third report of the standing committee on government agencies.

Pursuant to standing order 106(e), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CREUTZFELDT-JAKOB DISEASE

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I beg to inform the House that yesterday afternoon a neurosurgeon at Hotel-Dieu Grace Hospital in Windsor received a blood test indicating that a patient who had surgery in the hospital in March of this year may be suffering from Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease. The hospital immediately contacted the local medical officer of health and Health Canada to ascertain the appropriate procedures.

The House should know that reports indicate that the disease occurs worldwide, with an incidence of one case per million people each year. The disease can only be contracted in three general ways: first, sporadic CJD, where there is no evidence of the disease in prior or subsequent generations of a patient's family; second, inherited CJD, which accounts for approximately 5% to

15% of the cases; and third, through infection. Although CJD is caused by a transmissible agent, the disease is not considered by experts to be contagious in the traditional sense.

At the present time, Health Canada advises that the only proven manner for contracting CJD from an infected person has been through the unintended consequence of a medical procedure using tainted human matter or surgical instruments. While Hotel-Dieu Grace employs the latest Health Canada approved methods for sterilization, as an extra precaution, the hospital decided to suspend surgery temporarily so that OR instrumentation can undergo a special cleaning and disinfection. While there is only a theoretical possibility that any other surgery patient may have been infected, neurosurgeons from the hospital are contacting all patients who had surgery in that hospital since March.

I am pleased that the appropriate agencies were contacted immediately when the hospital became aware of the situation and that there has been close co-operation between all affected agencies since that time. Hospital staff were informed of all measures they should take at staff meetings this morning. I've also been assured by infectious disease experts that there is also no reason for members of the public to be concerned for their personal health. We will, however, be monitoring the situation very closely.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the professional health workers of Windsor for their rapid reaction and response to this situation.

1350

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): I'm very pleased to have an opportunity to respond on behalf of our caucus and our community, especially our health professionals in Windsor who are dealing with a situation that is most unfortunate at Hotel-Dieu Grace Hospital. Thankfully, under the good leadership of our CEO of that hospital, Mr Frank Bagatto, they have taken all the necessary requirements and precautions under Health Canada guidelines, under the direction of the public health unit, the director of Ontario for the public health unit, and all those who have all the information, to tell the people of Windsor that they know how they are to handle this situation.

It's very imperative that the citizenry of Windsor understand that the precautions that have been taken go beyond what is required under Health Canada guidelines. In the cancellation of surgery, in the specialized next step of sanitizing tools for the operating room, all of those items are things that go beyond what is required. We're pleased to see the kind of leadership our CEO and the hospital professionals have taken and intend to take.

I'm especially pleased to hear that the Ministry of Health will continue to monitor on a very regular and very frequent basis all the requirements that are happening so that all of us will in fact be safe. It's unfortunate that we deal with these things from time to time, and it's especially important to see the professional and swift manner in which we're able to deal with this.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): I know I join with all members in the House when I express heartfelt sympathy for the individual and the family of the individual who may be suffering from this tragic disease. I would also like, on behalf of our caucus, to indicate our appreciation to Mr Frank Bagatto and the staff of Hotel-Dieu Grace, who in consultation with the medical officer of health and Health Canada have taken swift and decisive action to ensure all available precautions are being taken.

The member for Windsor West has shared with me over the course of the last couple of hours her detailed discussions with the CEO of the hospital, and I want to indicate that I certainly share with her a strong faith in his leadership and his leadership team.

I will indicate that the hospital intends to hold a press conference at 2:30 in which many of the details that have been shared here and further details will be shared with the people of Windsor. I understand the concern the member for Windsor West has raised that it is important to get good solid information in people's hands and that there is an agreed-upon sense of confidence by the members of this Legislature Assembly in the leadership that has been shown at the hospital and the medical health unit and Health Canada. We will await further information from the minister as he monitors this.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PRIVATE HOSPITALS

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Premier. A week or more ago, a leading doctor in my community advanced a notion because we have had such issues around our hospital care, because we know of the number of beds we've lost, the two emergency rooms that were closed, the surgeries that go waiting time and time again. There are individuals like Mr Mousaly who we've spoken about in this House, delayed from a basic knee surgery and therefore now on the welfare system because we can't get our people to access care in a timely and quality fashion. This leading doctor advanced to our local media the notion of taking Grace hospital, soon to be closed, and turning it into a private hospital.

Premier, this is the headline in my Windsor Star for that same story: about privatizing the hospital so Americans can access our system. I'd like the Premier in the House to stand today and refuse to allow a private company to come in and take over our hospital.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the Minister of Health can respond.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'm aware of the headlines and the issue the honourable member has raised. I can only say that on this side of the House we're concentrating our full time and attention on providing accessible, sustainable, excel-

lent health care through public funds for Ontarians who are residents in Ontario.

I really don't have much to say about the proposal; I don't know any of the details of it. I can only say that certainly from our perspective we're concentrating on publicly funded, sustainable health care. We invested \$22.5 billion of taxpayers' money last year, up from \$17.4 billion in 1995. Perhaps the honourable member knows the statistics as well as I do now: health care spending has increased 27% over the last five years and 19% in the last two years alone. That is our focus. That is where the time and attention of the ministry is focused right now.

Mrs Papatello: My question was to the Premier of this province. It's in fact the Premier's statements that I'm referring to.

Premier, it was you who advanced the notion in the media in the Toronto area that you would entertain the notion of private hospitals in Ontario. On the heels of your comments, a leading doctor in my community is suggesting taking one of our closed hospitals and turning it into a private facility that caters to Americans, so that Americans can fly in to the helipad for access to care that in fact Windsor residents do not get in a timely fashion.

Premier, this is your responsibility and these are your remarks on this road you are taking us on. I'd like you to stand in the House today and say you will not allow a private company to come in and run our hospitals.

Hon Mr Clement: Again, there is certainly no proposal before this ministry or this government. All our focus is on treating Ontarians, making sure Ontarians have quality, accessible health care when they need it for medically necessary services. That is why we have invested \$22.5 billion last year, and why that investment was 27% higher than when we first got elected. That is what we are focusing on. We're not focusing on Americans or on giving health care to Americans. Our focus and our concern and what we spend 24 hours a day, seven days a week worrying about is the best health care for Ontarians. Perhaps the honourable member can help us in that regard.

Mrs Papatello: Premier, let me ask you this question again. It was your comments on Focus Ontario that started us down this road, that everyone has been responding to. It was your comments about privatizing hospitals that have set off alarm bells for Windsor residents who cannot access care today, after supposed investments in the hospital system, when in fact you closed thousands of beds, laid off thousands of nurses and are now attempting to get those nurses back—they still cannot find full-time jobs in the Ontario hospital system.

Mr Premier, I am asking you once again to stand in this House today and say you will not allow private hospitals to come into Ontario, you will not allow private companies to take over our existing hospitals. These are the kinds of headlines that have Windsorites alarmed. We don't access quality care as it is today. Despite the flurry of announcements your health minister chooses to make, our quality is not getting better. It's gotten worse in the

six years you've been Premier of this province. I'm asking you again, please say no to companies running hospitals.

Hon Mr Clement: Again, there's nothing to respond to because there's no proposal before us. Our focus is on Ontarians and their health care. If the honourable member wants to be helpful, then she can advise her leader not to play politics on a serious issue, and to work with us to ensure the future sustainability of our health care system. To do otherwise is to bury his head in the sand. It's a shameful exercise. Every leader has to be part of the solution.

If the honourable member doesn't want to take my word for it, she can take the word of the honourable member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot when he was quoted in the local press saying, "I don't know why everybody gets hot to trot about this, other than to score cheap political points. I think all options should be looked at." That's the recently elected honourable member saying that. That's what a member of her caucus said when asked about the need to look at all the solutions to maintain the sustainability of our health care system. So perhaps the honourable member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot has a bit more of an open mind about it than his caucus colleague—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I just want to say that once again I'm being quoted out of context.

The Speaker: It's not a point of order.

1400

NORTHERN ONTARIO HERITAGE FUND

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor West): Maybe I can find a question the Premier would like to answer. Premier, let's not wave papers around. If we're going to wave any around, it's going to be an application form for the northern heritage fund. I want to talk about your friends, the ones who managed to siphon hundreds of thousands of dollars from the northern heritage fund because they decided to set up a shell company in order to call themselves not-for-profit, because the rules said that for-profit companies could not access money from the northern heritage fund.

Not only did these friends of yours get hundreds of thousands of dollars, but your friend's son, who works at the fund, decided to sit down, spread out the paperwork and help them create this shell company to get around the rules.

My leader asked you this question this week in the House. Could you please tell us today, after you've had some time to think about it, how you rationalize to the public your friends taking money to run a golf tournament?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the Minister of Northern Development and Mines can respond.

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): The mandate of the northern Ontario heritage fund is to promote economic development and diversification of industry in northern Ontario. The issue the member opposite raises, with respect to an application she's referring to, was subjected to the normal, due-diligence processes. In fact, I have a letter from my deputy, Cam Clark, which says, "The application met the NOHFC tourism program's eligibility criteria and guidelines." Further, "The projects met the key objectives of attracting tourists to northern Ontario and marketing northern Ontario through national and international television and newspaper coverage."

Mrs Pupatello: Premier, we haven't been sitting in the House for four months. Now that you're back, we actually want you to answer a question. Let's try this again.

Another one of the clauses on the application form that this company is supposed to be required to answer is that in order to be eligible for any funding, the funding "must be necessary to make the project viable." Are you trying to suggest today that your friends, who set up a shell company in order to get around the rules to access hundreds of thousands of dollars from the northern heritage fund to run a golf tournament, were not able to do that because without that money they couldn't make the necessary project viable, when a Sudbury businessman, whose name is Sam Yawney, applied for the same money to run the same tournament with the same golfers in the north and wasn't able to access any money from the northern heritage fund?

Premier, welcome back. Could you please tell us how you rationalize hundreds of thousands of dollars for a golf tournament?

Hon Mr Newman: For the third time in this House, I want to clearly state that no application was brought forward by Mr Yawney—none. Every day you ask the question, and the answer remains the same: there was no application. The tournaments were not the same.

In fact, on January 22 of this year, Dalton McGuinty did receive a letter from Jim McClure, the secretary of the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp, in which he said, "As you may be aware, the NOHFC supported the 1999 tournament," which was in Sault Ste Marie, which no one seems to have a problem with, "with a similar contribution. As well, the NOHFC is expected to receive an application for similar funding to support the 2001 tournament, which is scheduled to be held in Thunder Bay. Northern Ontario and the host cities are showcased through the presence of national and international professional and amateur participants, as well as the national media coverage generated by the tournament."

Mrs Pupatello: Mr Premier, this final question is for you. Have your media advisers in the Premier's office, which has doubled since you've sat there, whose budget has doubled since you became the Premier, told you not to answer questions about your friends getting money from the northern heritage fund?

This final question is for the Premier. I ask the Premier directly, why is it that your friends can access hundreds of thousands of dollars from the northern heritage fund, and every other company was told not to bother to apply because they didn't qualify? But the Premier's friends were helped to start a shell company to get around the rules in order to get hundreds of thousands of dollars for a golf tournament in your part of this province.

Premier, I ask you again. Welcome back to this House. We insist on an answer on how the Premier's friends benefit by hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Hon Mr Newman: The question the member opposite has raised has been answered by the Premier in this House this week and it has been answered by me. I'll answer it again. But let's talk about what the Liberals did when they were in office.

Mrs Pupatello: No, let's talk about hundreds of thousands of dollars going to friends.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order.

Hon Mr Newman: Let's talk about what the Liberals did when they were in office. In 1994, the Haileybury country club received \$140,000 for an upgrade of the golf course and clubhouse. That was the Liberal—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Newman: Also there has been money that's gone to the New Liskeard golf course in the early 1990s.

Mrs Pupatello: Answer the question.

Hon Mr Newman: We've answered the questions. There was no application that was brought forward—

Mrs Pupatello: Chicken. Why won't you answer, you big chicken?

The Speaker: Minister, take a seat. The member for Windsor West, this is her last warning.

Minister.

Hon Mr Newman: Clearly we've answered the question. There was no application brought forward. No application was rejected because no application was brought forward.

WATER QUALITY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): My question is to the Premier. We just learned from the Walkerton inquiry that in 1997, after you privatized all the water testing labs, your Minister of Health wrote to the Minister of the Environment of the time urging him to require those private testing labs to immediately notify the medical officer of health of negative test results. If your government had acted on that suggestion, fewer people would have gotten sick in Walkerton and lives might have been saved. But you ignored it.

Premier, I want to ask you, why did you ignore and not act on that critical proposal?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the Minister of Health can respond.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of the Environment): Environment.

As the member opposite well knows, we now have some very key requirements in our drinking water regulations and, as a result, any adverse results are reported immediately to the local medical officer of health, the Ministry of the Environment, and the owner.

Ms Churley: Premier, I would appreciate an answer from you on this supplementary.

There is legislation before this House, Bill 3, the Safe Drinking Water Act, which, contrary to misinformed statements by your environment minister, requires that notice be given to all users if there is unsafe water. It requires that a summary of all test results be sent directly to water users right at their homes with their water bill. It requires that all test results be posted on an electronic water registry. As well, it provides for a permanent, dedicated safe drinking water fund, which your government took away.

Premier, can you explain to us why your government is opposed to those measures?

Hon Mrs Witmer: At the present time, we in the province of Ontario have the toughest water regulations and standards anywhere in Canada. We have the most comprehensive regulatory framework. It sets out some very clear steps on treatment and testing. It also indicates what must be done to protect the public when the water does not meet acceptable standards. As we move forward, we would hope that all other provinces in Canada would adopt similar standards and a similar framework.

Ms Churley: Minister, you're missing the point here. What we're calling for, and what the people of Ontario, environmentalists and experts, are calling for is a law, not more regulations and guidelines.

1410

The Canadian Environmental Law Association, a non-partisan group of widely respected environmental experts—and the new environment minister shouldn't laugh, like previous ministers, when those names are mentioned—said that your new water regulation does not displace the need for special drinking water legislation in Ontario. They say your regulations don't go far enough, aren't good enough and won't save lives, and don't create a clear statutory right to clean and safe drinking water. They have called upon your government and the Liberals to give fast passage to this act.

Tell me, Minister, given all this criticism of your regulations by experts and the growing concern about the safety of our water and the growing calls for a bill, a law, if you don't pass mine, why will you not bring in a safe drinking water act to protect the lives of the people of Ontario when they turn on their taps?

Hon Mrs Witmer: We have already brought in a drinking water protection regulation. Again I would emphasize that we now have the toughest standards anywhere. We have the most comprehensive regulatory framework.

If the member wishes to speak about experts, there are many experts at the present time who have indicated that other provinces should take similar steps to what has happened in Ontario.

We will continue to review our standards. We will continue to review our framework. We will continue to ensure that we have the toughest standards in Canada.

HOUSING POLICY

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Yesterday you rolled out the latest boondoggle from the development industry. You've gutted rent control for them, you've stopped social housing and you cut their taxes, but they say it's still not enough. They want more. They want more, even though the most they will ever build are units renting for \$1,400 a month.

Minister, why are you so intent on throwing even more money at developers even if tenants and taxpayers suffer?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I'm not sure I heard the whole question, but I did hear a reference to the announcement yesterday where I accepted the Housing Supply Working Group's recommendations.

This group was formed in September of last year to look at why there are not enough rental units being built across Ontario and across Canada. They looked historically, that Canadian cities were building as many rental units as comparable cities across North America in the 1960s and early 1970s, and yet in the 1990s we were falling far short of that. So they looked at what changed, and their report outlines some barriers. I'm pleased to say our government has removed a lot of the barriers at the provincial level, but there's still a lot of work to be done at the federal level, around taxation and capital gains, and at the municipal level, and we're taking steps to address that.

Mr Marchese: Minister, all I can tell you is that this boondoggle to the developers has got to stop.

Your policy has been a total failure. In the eyes of everyone in the field of housing, it's been a complete failure. The units are not being built, yet you've added more than \$5 billion to the value of landlords' investments. Who has paid for that? The tenants. In Toronto they're paying \$2,000 more a year.

Minister, why don't you admit that your housing policy has been a total boondoggle and a total failure?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I think most people, anybody who looks at this objectively, would say the only boondoggle that's taken place was under the NDP government, when even the auditor talked about \$1 billion of the taxpayers' money being squandered.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): My question is to the Premier. I want to ask about a matter of tremendous importance to the working families of children and adults with mental and intellectual disabilities in this province.

Recently, members of the Alliance of Associations Serving Children and Youth publicly told you that the developmental services and children's mental health sectors are facing a severe crisis. These organizations came together in an unprecedented fashion from all across Ontario to tell you that without increased funding support, their agencies face a complete breakdown in their ability to recruit and retain the needed staff to work with our most vulnerable citizens.

Your government's woefully inadequate response to this crisis, which is literally the result of 10 years of frozen support to this vital sector, was to announce a one-time funding increase last year that amounted to less than a 1% increase in remuneration for the dedicated but seriously undervalued workers at these agencies.

Premier, my question is this: do you recognize in any way how serious this problem is, and will you go beyond your government's usual rhetoric and commit to providing the needed funding to keep Ontario's developmental services and children's mental health sectors from collapsing?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the Minister of Community and Social Services can respond.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for children, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Providing supports for people with developmental disabilities and the tremendously committed folks who work with them each and every day has been a real priority for this government. In 1999, we provided an additional \$35 million to that sector. Last year, we provided in the budget an extra \$50 million to support that sector.

We strongly believe that we have a strong responsibility to provide for the most vulnerable in our society. We can do that in a whole host of ways: helping families through respite care, providing funds to the agencies that provide this great service to people and doing a whole host of things to improve the lives of these folks in our communities, our fellow citizens with developmental disabilities.

Mr Gravelle: Premier, we need you to respond to this. Minister, you're just not dealing with the actual crisis. The human infrastructure is crumbling and the wrecking ball is your government's apathy toward this critical problem. Staff turnover at these agencies is threatening to impact the care received by our loved ones, which includes my own brother, Mark, who is a resident at a home run by the Lakehead Association for Community Living. All of us as family members are very, very concerned.

The reality is that agencies simply do not have the resources to pay their staff the adequate wages. The fact is, the sector is falling further and further behind while the 71,000 staff employed in these agencies from all across Ontario are becoming increasingly disillusioned.

Premier, your lack of commitment to providing proper support to all these agencies may have dire consequences down the line. You've got to take this seriously. Will you at least begin the process of addressing this serious issue by committing to a multi-year action strategy to address

the horrible inequities that plague the system? Will you give us something in today's budget? Will you give the Alliance of Associations Serving Children and Youth some semblance of hope that you understand and will act on behalf of those they serve? We need your help in this. It's a true crisis.

Hon Mr Baird: Over last fall, we conducted a review particularly of the developmental disabilities sector in the province of Ontario. We went out and asked agencies right across the province for their best advice, for their opinions, for their suggestions on how we could improve the lives of people with developmental disabilities. We got a terrific amount of input. You bet we'll be there to ensure that we provide some good supports for people with developmental disabilities. We've done it in recent years and we'll continue to do so. If you ask the sector, if you ask the Ontario Association for Community Living, if you ask their families if they are satisfied with the efforts of this government in recent years, they'll say yes. They'll say yes this afternoon and they'll say yes this evening.

ONTARIO STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): My question is directed to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Ontario student loans make post-secondary education accessible for thousands of Ontario students. But as the Provincial Auditor has pointed out, our government inherited a system with a high default rate, a rate of some 23.5%, almost 25%. In other words, one in four students had defaulted or was defaulting.

I support the auditor's concern, as this was unfair to hard-working taxpayers, it was unfair to students who paid off their loans, it was unfair to governments in the past that supported graduate negative behaviour, and it was unfair to educational institutions. Minister, what is the current rate of default on Ontario student loans and what steps have you taken to address this situation?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues): I'd like to thank the member for Northumberland for his continuing interest in our students. I'd just say that the government is committed to making sure that every qualified and able and willing student will have a place in our post-secondary institutions.

Student assistance and student loans are extremely important to the accessibility of these young people. This is the time to give them some credit, because in fact over the last three years our default rates across all post-secondary where our students attend—I'm talking about our colleges, our universities and our private vocational schools—has decreased. They're at about a 15.7% default rate, down 2.5% last year alone and almost 8% over three years. So we're moving in the right direction, and our government is tremendously committed to helping these young students better manage the costs of their post-secondary education.

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Mr Galt: Certainly low default rates are good for everyone: students, institutions and taxpayers. But while the default rate has declined substantially, our government should be as committed as ever to ensuring that students are able to afford the cost of taking out student loans. Minister, we've heard about increasing tuition fees, and we've heard about the increasing costs of inflation. What measures are responsible for the decline in default rates, and what options will you pursue to help students better manage the costs of post-secondary education?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: This has been a priority for the government, to work with students. Of course they are advising us every step of the way. We have enhanced our Ontario student opportunity grants to limit the amount of debt students can accumulate during their studies and provided a tax credit to reduce interest costs. We've increased the number of opportunities for student aid outside of OSAP through initiatives such as our Aiming for the Top scholarships. Over 4,000 students received these scholarships from our secondary schools last year. There is the Ontario student opportunity trust fund, a shared fund between the private sector and our universities. Over \$600 million was raised to help our students at every institution. Our Ontario Works study program—this is an opportunity for some 3,500 to 7,000 students—has doubled the funding from \$5.4 million to \$10.8 million. This helps students earn money while they're at our colleges and universities. Everyone in the House knows about the loan harmonization legislation, our work with the federal government, because we want to work together on behalf of our students. We're doing much more together to help our students in our post-secondary—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. The city of Hamilton, as you're aware, is now going through its budget process. There is a shortfall caused by your government of \$27 million in transitional funding that you owe the good people of the city of Hamilton.

You met with Mayor Wade in March. You promised in March that you would have an answer and that you would consider their request for additional funding for Hamilton. As of today, Minister, you have not responded to the city; you have not come through with one cent. The budget process is almost completed. The city is in a serious financial crisis as a result of what you have imposed upon them—not the mismanagement, not the mishandling, but the shortfall of \$27 million.

You came through with funding for Toronto to deal with their budget problem and their transition costs. Why are you treating the citizens of Hamilton as second-class citizens? Why have you held us hanging since March?

Will you stand up today and tell us that you will send a cheque for \$27 million that you owe to the city of Hamilton?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I'm glad to answer the member's question. First of all, his premise is totally false. We were asked to be a partner in finding the savings that will accrue, year after year, to the residents of Hamilton. That's for all the people of Hamilton. We've agreed to 100% financing, where 50% is in grants and 50% is in loans. Recognizing that all the savings that will accrue throughout the years to the residents and ratepayers of Hamilton cannot be achieved upfront and immediately, we've given a loan of 50% and a 50% grant. That's 100% financing.

Mr Agostino: Hopefully the minister will soon get briefed by his staff and catch up on what's happening in his ministry now, because it is outright wrong, Minister. You are wrong. You owe the city of Hamilton \$27 million this year for transitional funding. Any way you spin it, that is the bottom line.

As a result of your mismanagement, you're going to end up with 5% to 10% tax increases, you're going to end up with user fees, you're going to end up with cuts in services, you're going to have basic services cut to the most vulnerable people in our community. You met with the mayor in March. You committed you would look at the proposal. You have done absolutely nothing since you met with Mayor Wade in March. You didn't tell him that you've covered it off. You said you would look at their request.

Minister, again, you've committed to Mayor Wade that you would look at their request for \$27 million. Again, today, why are you shafting the people of Hamilton, and will you come through with the \$27 million that you've shortchanged us in transitional funding?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I see the member hasn't lost his usual grace and charm and, as usual, he's as accurate on the facts on this issue as he is on others. There was no commitment made to the mayor in terms of restructuring. They realize they got a fair deal. They would like to have 100% in grant, but unfortunately it's the formula where 50% is in loans and 50% is a grant. The residents of Hamilton received the savings. The answer was no then and it's no now.

The issue that Mayor Wade brought up for the residents of Hamilton was around some of the unfunded liability in one of the amalgamated townships of Flamborough. I've also taken the liberty of meeting with your member who represents that area, quite ably, I might add. He has given me some advice on that and we're still examining the ramifications of it.

So, as usual, you're wrong on your facts and you've spun it out in your usual graceful and charming way.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): My question today is for the Minister of Northern Develop-

ment and Mines. I want to say how delighted the people of my riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka are to be included in the boundaries of northern Ontario. We are now able to take advantage of many programs and services that were once out of reach. The provincial Liberals have been very unclear in their position on whether or not they support this initiative. The Leader of the Opposition says yes; the member for Sudbury says no. Frankly, I'm not sure who speaks for the Liberals or how they feel about this initiative. Perhaps you could outline for the opposition some of the rationale behind making Parry Sound-Muskoka part of the north.

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I'd like to thank the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka for the excellent question. As part of our government's commitment to the north, the Mike Harris government provided one clear definition of the north. In the past, various government programs had used different definitions of "northern Ontario." Some included Muskoka; some stopped at Parry Sound. We have eliminated the confusion that has surrounded which programs northern Ontario residents may access. The expansion of northern Ontario has benefited Muskoka as well as the rest of the north. The inclusion of Muskoka gives the north a larger population and a greater voice in Ontario. By clearly defining the northern boundary and now including Muskoka, we have made things fair. Now permanent Muskoka residents have access to all northern-focused funding and not a smattering of programs chosen at random.

Mr Miller: Thank you for that answer, Minister. Clarifying the boundaries does make it much simpler to understand. In fact, I believe the federal government in August of last year agreed with the Mike Harris government's clear definition of boundaries and adopted them. Apparently the provincial and federal Liberals can't agree. Perhaps you could outline some of the programs many of my constituents are now able to take advantage of.

Hon Mr Newman: I'd be happy to answer that question. The member for Parry Sound-Muskoka is correct. The federal Liberals did adopt our boundaries. When the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane was asked, he declared that the federal decision was nuts and that the area was already rich in resources. The member is correct again when he says the only thing more confusing than the northern boundaries under the Liberal government is the Liberal position on whether or not they support clear northern boundaries.

But I say to the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka, in answer to your question, some of the many programs that will help stimulate regional economic development and social well-being are the northern Ontario heritage fund, which has been increased from \$30 million per year to \$60 million per year and to date has created some 10,000 jobs in the north, the violence-against-women prevention initiatives, as well as the health recruitment tour travel subsidy and the extended grants for family physicians and specialists.

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TUITION FEES

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, 77% of the people polled in a 1999 Angus Reid poll agree that money, lack of financial support and cost of tuition are the factors most likely to keep someone from continuing their education beyond high school. A University of Guelph study found that over a 10-year period, relatively more students from higher-educated, affluent families chose admission to Guelph than those from lower-educated and low-income brackets. The cost of attendance appears to influence the choice of institution in which such students eventually register.

Minister, as you defend your current policies, don't you believe, as I do, that government should be conducting research to prove costs are not a barrier to accessing a post-secondary education?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues): I think every member in this House should be proud of what we accomplish here in this great province, and that is that no student has been or will be denied access to our post-secondary institutions because of financial circumstances. We have made this a priority, and I hope the member will assist us in getting this message out to our young people. We have made it a priority. We have capped our tuition fees so that parents have a plan. They know they're capped at 2% for the next five years. That's part of the plan.

We have put money into our colleges and universities by asking them to set aside 30% of the tuition fee increases, estimated to be \$125 million this year alone, to help young people who may not get what they feel is enough support from OSAP; they can go into these other funds. We have set up the kinds of supports in our universities and colleges so that no student should be in our colleges and universities who cannot afford to be there.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The minister's time is up.

Mr Marchese: Minister, I know you're quite proud of your policies; I understand that and I'm not defending them. I'm telling you that the study done in 1999 shows you've got a problem with 77% of the public, and the study they did in Guelph clearly shows accessibility to post-secondary education is the problem.

The study by Ipsos-Reid that was released yesterday says that two thirds of Ontarians, 64%, including a majority of decided PC voters, 53%, want increased provincial funding for universities and colleges, even if it may mean cancelling tax cuts. Seventy per cent of parents are concerned their kids won't be able to attend university or college, even if they are qualified. The main reason? They can't afford it, 79%; including decided PC voters, 78%. They have concerns. What you're saying to

this 70% to 80% of the people is, "Don't worry. Marchese, help me to communicate that it's not a problem." They are concerned, and I'm telling you, if you believe your policies are correct, to do the study so you can say to the public, "It's not a problem." Do a study. That's what I'm asking you to do. Can you do that?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: There are numbers of studies that come our way. Right across the country, Ministers of Education are looking at them all the time. We're looking for the best advice we can get.

But, you know, right here in Ontario the best advice we get is from the students themselves. We have an advisory committee. They have asked us to set up certain funds, and we've worked together over the last five years to do just that. We have set aside the Ontario student opportunity trust fund—the private sector and the public sector, \$600 million; 185,000 students will be supported over the next 10 years.

Aiming for the Top last September—call your high schools, every single one of you; get the message out. We have Aiming for the Top scholarships to help students who get marks and who have financial needs—last year alone, 4,000 students. We have grants to limit the maximum annual debt incurred by students to \$7,000. If they get the millennium scholarship, it's limited to \$6,500.

Students are our priority. We want them to reach their hopes and dreams.

FIREFIGHTING

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): My question is for the Solicitor General. Firefighters in western Ontario are having difficulty providing the same excellent level of emergency services during fire calls since the restructuring of Hydro in Ontario. I've heard from several fire officials so far that since the creation of Hydro One, firefighters must wait up to one and a half hours to get a call back from Hydro One to determine if downed wires are dangerous or to get the service to a residence cut to protect the people.

Clearly, this is not a good and acceptable situation. It seems you haven't talked to the Minister of Energy regarding the changes he's making in implementation of our emergency service personnel.

Minister, can I have your commitment today that you will immediately investigate this situation and ask the Minister of Energy to improve the service so that they can do their jobs safely and effectively, as firefighters, while protecting all hard-working families and citizens of Ontario?

Hon David Turnbull (Solicitor General): I'll refer this to the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): I thank the honourable member for bringing the situation to my attention. I take the matter he has raised quite seriously, and I'd be happy to report back to him once I've had an opportunity to look into the situation.

Mr Levac: Thank you for that answer. Solicitor General, maybe I can ask for a second commitment. The same firefighters have mentioned that during the fire investigations it often takes the Electrical Safety Authority days to respond to an investigation of a fire in order to determine the source of that fire, whether it was electrical or not. I'm told, again, that investigators on the scene, which took mere hours before, now takes days. I'm sure the staff of the Electrical Safety Authority are doing the best they can. However, this delay can result in the cause of a fire not being determined as arson or anything else, and thus even cause a delay in the possibility of a police investigation.

My supplementary is very simple. When is your government going to make these changes, so that our firefighters can do their job, and make sure we talk to both ministries to do their job for the people of Ontario?

Hon Mr Wilson: Again, I thank the honourable member for bringing the situation to my attention. The Electrical Safety Authority is a self-governing body and, on behalf of the government, of the member and of all members here, I will certainly encourage them to improve the situation if it is as you describe. I have no doubt that you're bringing a factual case forward. I will endeavour to talk to that self-governing body and make sure they respond appropriately to these serious situations.

TOURISM

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): My question is to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation. As the nice weather is upon us, the minds of many Ontarians are turning to thoughts of vacations, especially the traditional family road trip. There are several tourist attractions in my riding, particularly in the Rice Lake, Belmont Lake, Chemung Lake, Clear Lake and Stony Lake areas, gearing up for the summer tourist season. They're hoping to capitalize on the traffic from families on vacation and to lure these travellers into their sites for a visit. But not every small tourist operator has the budget for an elaborate advertising campaign to let vacationers know about their particular operation. What are you doing to help tourist operations get more travellers through their doors?

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation): I thank the member for Peterborough for his question and appreciate his ongoing interest in supporting job growth in rural Ontario and in tourism.

In addition to our tourism marketing partnership, an investment in partnership with the private sector, we also have a new signage system in the province, which I want to boast about a bit today, called the tourism-oriented directional signage program, or TODS for short. These are the beautiful blue signs on our highways and byways across the province that help tourists find attractions and accommodations, to help them find their destination more quickly and safely and, as well, to try to pull travellers off the highway into unplanned trips and to

spend money in our communities. Certainly, everyone would agree that this is a major improvement on the pre-Mike Harris signage, which was inconsistent, difficult to follow and totally funded by the taxpayer. This new system is clear, consistent, user-friendly and totally funded by the private sector. Not a dollar of taxpayer money funds this program—a major triumph for tourism.

Mr Stewart: I was remiss in not mentioning the Otonabee River and the complete Trent-Severn system that runs through my riding.

It is good news for taxpayers that they don't have to pay for the overhaul of the tourism signage system. I've heard positive feedback on the new system from tourists and businesses in my riding. But tourist operators in my riding want to be sure the system is actually working, that it's bringing more business through the door. What evidence do you have that this new system is meeting that goal?

Hon Mr Hudak: That's an excellent question, and I'm pleased to respond to the member for Peterborough. The TODS signage program has signed up 80% of capacity. Originally a 10-year commitment, already, after three years, 80% of the destinations have been signed.

In a recent survey of motoring tourists, we found that 92% agreed that TODS helped them find their tourism destination; 71% said TODS influenced decisions en route regarding places to stop, hopefully additional places; 92% agreed the information was easy to understand. So the system is working. Whether they're trying to find a place in the Kawartha Lakes or find their way down to the Haida, this helps tourists get to places and spend money in our communities.

Additionally, to make sure that we continue to improve the program, I've asked my hard-working parliamentary assistant, the lovely and talented member for London-Fanshawe, Frank Mazzilli, to work to make improvements to the system, to make it the best system in all of North America.

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CHILD CARE

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. I have been travelling across Ontario following a tour with the Coalition for Better Child Care. In community after community, I've heard stories from parents who are struggling to balance work and family life. Government members have chosen not to attend these forums and I think it is important that you are aware of an issue that has been repeated many times.

Families have told me that criteria from your government require families to liquidate their savings before they can qualify for a child care subsidy. In one case, a family whose grandparents set aside money each year on the child's birthday in a registered education savings plan was told they had to cash this gift before they would be able to access a child care subsidy which

they needed. Families who are trying to be responsible, who are investing in RRSPs and RESPs for their children's education, must cash them before they have access to a child care subsidy.

Minister, will you change this regressive policy that punishes families that are trying to invest in the future and well-being of their children?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for children, minister responsible for francophone affairs): We recognize that for many working families in Ontario child care is an important resource that helps parents balance the pressures of raising a family and of being able to maintain gainful employment. We recognize that's a significant challenge. That's why this government has increased support to both parents and their children in this area, not just with the substantial amount of money, more than \$500 million, to be spent more directly on child care supports, but through the \$200-million Ontario child care supplement for working families. We do have a needs-based child care subsidy program in the province of Ontario. Unfortunately, taxpayers are not able to subsidize those who have other financial means.

The member opposite cited one example of a registered retirement savings plan. I can tell the member opposite I would be uncomfortable asking those who can't afford to make contributions to an RRSP to subsidize those who can.

Mrs Dombrowsky: Minister, I want to tell you about a woman in my riding who wrote me a letter: "Last year I had a healthy baby boy. Unfortunately, I don't make that much money, so I needed a subsidy to send my child to daycare." This woman had \$6,000 that had taken her seven years to save, but because of your policy she was told that she had to cash her savings before she would be considered for a child care space she could afford.

Ontario families are forced to choose between affordable child care now or saving for their children's education later. Seventy-nine per cent of families fear that they will not be able to afford their children's education. My constituent asked, "Why does the federal government encourage parents to save money for their children's education when the provincial government penalizes you for it?" These are hard-working families, families struggling to get ahead.

Minister, will you amend your child care subsidy policy so that working families are not penalized for planning for their children's future?

Hon Mr Baird: I'll address the issue that the member raises directly. She talked about our policy. In fact, this policy with respect to assets has been in place since 1983. It wasn't changed under the Davis government; it wasn't changed under the Peterson government; it wasn't changed under the Rae government; it wasn't changed under the Harris government.

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): You weren't alive back then.

Hon Mr Baird: To the member for Hamilton Mountain, I was.

The member opposite says that parents would be forced to cash it in. I'm very happy to direct the member that if a parent cashes it in, they're still not eligible.

What I can't do as Minister of Community and Social Services and what we can't do as a government is ask those who can't afford to make a contribution to a registered retirement savings plan to subsidize the child care of someone who can.

LIVING LEGACY

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I have a question for the Minister of Natural Resources. Ontario's Living Legacy has recently celebrated its second anniversary. I know that Ontario's Living Legacy made possible the protection of 378 new parks and protected areas, the largest such increase in history. What made Ontario's Living Legacy possible was a previous agreement, the Ontario Forest Accord.

The Ontario Forest Accord brought together, for the first time ever, representatives from the forestry industry, the environment community and the provincial government to protect natural areas and to protect wood supply and jobs to industry.

Minister, can you tell us about the Ontario Forest Accord and about the recent report back you received on the accord?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): I thank the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford for the excellent question. In fact, the Ontario Forest Accord is a revolutionary agreement between three parties: the provincial government, as the member mentioned; the Partnership for Public Lands; and our forest industry. They work together on the Ontario Forest Accord Advisory Board to help us make sure that we stay true to the original agreement.

I think the best way to describe the actions of the board is in the board's own words. They said, "Prior to the signing of the accord in March 1999, such an agreement was almost unthinkable. Our normal mode of communication during these times was confrontation and arguing with each other. The accord struck a careful balance among competing interests. It moved away from the win-lose attitude of the combatants in the so-called 'war in the woods.' It not only called a truce for the moment, it promised a new way of working together from this time forward."

Mr Tascona: I know Ontarians are thankful for your good work with respect to the environment.

Now that Ontario's Living Legacy is a reality, I understand that it also has grown from its original mandate and now is a province-wide program. Minister, can you give us some details on how the Living Legacy has expanded?

Hon Mr Snobelen: Certainly, I'd be pleased to. In the member's own area, the Lake Simcoe environmental management strategy has been put together and is receiving some \$75,000 to help do an integrated approach to protecting the environment, including fisheries, natural heritage features, recreation, tourism and the local and

regional economies. So it's working right in the member's own riding.

This provides us with greater protection for species at risk, greater participation for youth in Living Legacy, more protection enhancement for fish and wildlife and their natural habitats, and of course the acquisition of more natural areas for their protection; this, on top of regulating and protecting those 378 new parks and protected areas.

We're hard at work, busy making Ontario a better place for future generations.

NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT SUPPLEMENT

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, can you guarantee that none of the 844 million federal dollars that you will receive from the national children's agenda will be used to subsidize or to replace any provincial money which is now being used to support children's services?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for children, minister responsible for francophone affairs): We have worked very closely with the federal government on a series of initiatives to try to improve the lives of young children. Improving the early years of children from zero to six is a tremendous priority.

I can tell the member opposite that we presented a budget in estimates last year and all of the new funding for 2001-02 will of course be new funding. One of the commitments was to establish a baseline of supports. I can say that in Ontario we were an early leader in providing supports to young children.

The new national children's agenda, money coming from the federal government as a result of the efforts of the Premier in encouraging the federal government to come to the table with additional resources, was a tremendous victory. We're pleased to have the federal Liberal government joining our effort for this, what will be the third phase of our children's agenda.

Ms Martel: Minister, if I understood you correctly, you are guaranteeing that none of the federal money will be used to subsidize or to replace provincial dollars now supporting children's services.

You see, Minister, you are the government that takes the federal money for children and claws it back from those on social assistance in this province. You don't add one new dollar to support the poorest families in the province. What we want to guarantee is that you will not do the same thing again, that you will not take this federal money and subsidize or replace provincial dollars that are already supporting programs. We want to be sure that all of the \$844 million will be used to support new, important services for children.

So I ask again, Minister, can you guarantee that not one penny of the \$844 million will be used to either sub-

sidize or replace provincial money now supporting children's services in Ontario?

1450

Hon Mr Baird: It will all be new money; of course it will be new money.

The member opposite talked about the adjustment made with respect to the national child benefit supplement. I am very pleased to provide the member opposite with some information. She may be unaware that that national child benefit supplement reinvestment strategy is going on in her own community, in Sudbury, in spending an additional million dollars in 1999-2000 to help the send-a-kid-to-camp program, to pre-kindergarten schools and to support for teen parent housing, right in her own community of Sudbury. We're providing the Ontario child care supplement for working families, which has been an absolutely essential part of doing something for those real heroes in our society: the working families who aren't on welfare and who are living and working on low and modest incomes, the real heroes who are getting up and making less than \$29,000 a year.

I'll sum it up with a quote from the federal member Ovid Jackson, the MP for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, who said, "I am encouraged by the efforts that have been made by all levels of government to ensure that all residents of Ontario receive the best care, the best education," and the best health care. "The national child benefit was developed to fight child poverty and to help low-income Canadian families move from welfare to work," and it's been an outstanding success.

NORTHERN EDUCATION SERVICES

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a question for the minister of universities and colleges. As the minister would know, the small, particularly northern, colleges in this province have had severe funding problems over the last few years. As she would also know, this has resulted in the closure of satellite campuses in the Elliot Lake and Wawa area of Sault College, and now we've become aware that Collège Boréal will be closing their campus in Elliot Lake.

Could the minister assure me and my constituents that funding formulas for the small northern community colleges will take into account the need to reach out into northern Ontario's smaller communities and provide access for my constituents and other constituents, so they may maintain campuses in rural areas?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues): The colleges and some universities that are smaller and in rural, remote communities do have challenges. One of the positions of former governments and our government has been that there is some consideration in the grant regs to support the small and remote colleges. Perhaps that is something that could be looked at in the future.

In other instances there are special considerations with regard to working with many of the satellite colleges. My

colleagues in central and southwestern Ontario have difficulty with their colleges being able to support satellite colleges. Where they have been successful, there has been tremendous support from local municipalities. So I think it is a matter of partnerships—municipal partnerships, private sector partnerships—to encourage these small, remote campuses. In most parts of Ontario where there has been success, there has been this kind of a partnership.

PETITIONS

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke):

I am pleased to present a petition this afternoon signed by approximately 50 of my constituents from the Golden Friendship Club in Pembroke. I want to thank particularly Mrs Marianne Swan of RR3, Cobden, who has submitted this petition on behalf of this seniors' group in the Pembroke area. The petition basically expresses a very real and serious concern about the removal of the Lord's Prayer from various meetings and from school exercises across the province. This group of 50 seniors expresses very serious concern and regret about this removal.

I'm pleased to present this petition on their behalf to the assembly this afternoon.

CHILD CARE

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Conservative government under Mike Harris has cut funding for regulated child care spaces in Ontario by 15% between 1995 and 1998;

"Whereas the Conservative government under Mike Harris has yet to implement the recommendations of its own commission's Early Years report by Dr Fraser Mustard to create a seamless, integrated early years education system;

"Whereas the Conservative government will receive \$844 million over the next five years from the federal government for early years development projects;

"Whereas the Conservative government lags behind other provinces in announcing its plans for the \$844 million in federal money for early years development; and

"Whereas other provinces are implementing innovative, affordable and accessible child care programs, such as Quebec's \$5-a-day child care program;

"Whereas the need for affordable, accessible, regulated child care and family resource centres continues to grow in Ontario;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“We demand the Harris government immediately match and earmark a significant portion of the \$844 million from the federal government for expanded regulated child care spaces and family resource programs.”

This is signed by 39 people from Toronto. I agree with them and I've affixed my signature to it.

HORSE RIDING SAFETY

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas an increasing number of Ontarians are turning to horseback riding as a recreational activity; and

“Whereas many of these inexperienced riders are children; and

“Whereas currently there are no minimum safety standards regulating riding establishments; and

“Whereas coroners' inquests into horse riding fatalities from as long ago as 1977 have called for the mandatory use of riding helmets and boots; and

“Whereas an unacceptable number of preventable injuries and fatalities have occurred while horseback riding;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: to pass into law the private member's bill introduced by Tina Molinari, MPP for Thornhill, entitled the Horse Riding Safety Act, 2001, in order to increase the safety of horse riders under the age of 18 by requiring the operators of riding establishments to ensure that proper safety equipment is used, and to amend the Highway Traffic Act and make it an offence for any rider under the age of 18 to ride a horse on a highway without the proper safety equipment.”

I support this petition. These petitions are coming in daily. I affix my signature.

AUTISM SERVICES

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas we, the citizens of Ontario, feel that the government is violating the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms by discriminating against autistic spectrum disordered children in the delivery of necessary health care. This is a petition to offer the intensive behaviour treatment required to all autistic spectrum disordered children, not only to those most severely afflicted, and abolish waiting lists for essential health care to these children....

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

“To offer the intensive behaviour treatment required to all autistic spectrum disordered children, not only to those most severely afflicted, and abolish waiting lists for essential health care to these children.”

I agree with this petition and I affix my signature to it.

SAFE DRINKING WATER LEGISLATION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the people of Ontario have the right to receive clean and safe drinking water; and

“Whereas clean, safe drinking water is a basic human entitlement and essential for the protection of public health; and

“Whereas the people of Ontario have the right to receive accurate and immediate information about the quality of water; and

“Whereas Mike Harris and the government of Ontario have failed to protect the quality of drinking water in Ontario; and

“Whereas Mike Harris and the government of Ontario have failed to provide the necessary financial resources to the Ministry of the Environment; and

“Whereas the policies of Mike Harris and the government of Ontario have endangered the environment and the health of the citizens of Ontario;

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

“(1) Immediately restore adequate funding and staffing to the Ministry of the Environment;

“(2) Immediately pass into law Bill 96,” now Bill 3, “the Safe Drinking Water Act, 2000.”

I agree with this petition and will affix my signature to it.

1500

SEWAGE SLUDGE

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It is so seldom I get to speak.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas residents of the Durham riding have raised concerns over the spreading and storage of sewage sludge and other biosolids; and

“Whereas Bill 149 has been introduced by Durham MPP, John O'Toole, to regulate the spreading and storage of sewage sludge and biosolids, including paper sludge;

“Whereas Bill 149 would require that no person shall spread sewage sludge or other biosolids without a certificate of approval or a provisional certificate of approval from the director;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 149 to amend the Environmental Protection Act and add the relevant sections regarding the spreading and storage of sewage sludge.”

I'm pleased to sign and endorse this very important initiative.

SALE OF SCHOOLS

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): This is to the Parliament of Ontario and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the Hughes Public School at 17 Innes Ave in the city of Toronto closed down and its premises have been declared surplus by the Toronto District School Board;

“Whereas the city of Toronto has issued a building permit to the Toronto District School Board permitting the reconstruction of Hughes Public School for an entity called Beatrice House, for the purpose of a private academic school;

“Whereas local taxpayers’ concerns have been ignored by the Toronto District School Board;

“Whereas other locations, such as the Brother Edmund Rice School or the Earls court Public School, which are being closed down, have been offered to Beatrice House to no avail;

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

“That the Honourable Minister of Education investigate the leasing arrangement between the Toronto District School Board and Beatrice House inasmuch as:

“(1) Boards are to seek fair market value when selling, leasing or otherwise disposing of schools, except that the price for the property not to exceed the value of the ministry’s grant for the public pupil places; and

“(2) Boards are to offer the property to coterminous boards and other public agencies; and

“(3) The Toronto District School Board has not dealt in good faith with our neighbourhood residents;

“Therefore, we respectfully ask you to consider our plea for justice. The Toronto District School Board has ignored our concerns and due diligence. We as a community tried everything within our power to fight the glaring and obvious wrong done to us, but to no avail.”

I’m glad to sign this petition as well.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Petitions from so many concerned citizens.

“Whereas the annual rent increase guideline for multi-unit residential dwellings in Ontario increases every year more than the rate of inflation and more than the cost-of-living increase for most tenants;

“Whereas no new affordable rental housing is being built by the private sector, despite the promise that the implementation of vacancy decontrol in June of 1998 would encourage new construction;

“Whereas over 100,000 people are on the waiting list for social housing, homelessness has increased as a result of unaffordable rents, and high rents are a direct cause of the national housing crisis;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to implement an immediate province-wide freeze on rents”—the New Democrats proposed—“which will stop all guideline increases, above-guideline increases and increases to maximum rent for all sitting tenants in Ontario for a period of at least two years.”

I would ask Mark to send it to the clerks because I support this petition very strongly.

PROTECTION DES MINEURS

M. Bob Wood (London-Ouest): I have a petition signed by 639 people.

« Étant donné que des enfants sont exposés à des biens et services sexuellement explicites dans un grand nombre d’établissements commerciaux ;

« Étant donné qu’un grand nombre de municipalités n’ont aucun arrêté municipal visant à protéger les mineurs contre les biens et services sexuellement explicites, et que, pour les municipalités ayant de tels arrêtés municipaux, on n’y trouve aucune uniformité, et que ces municipalités n’ont pas réussi à protéger les mineurs contre les biens et services sexuellement explicites ;

« Étant donné que l’Ontario devrait avoir une seule loi au niveau provincial visant à protéger les mineurs contre les biens et services sexuellement explicites,

« Nous, les soussignés, demandons à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario d’adopter le projet de loi 95 visant à protéger les mineurs contre les biens et services sexuellement explicites dans le plus bref délai. »

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): C’était excellent, la dernière pétition qui a été rapportée.

J’ai ici une pétition soussignée par beaucoup de gens du nord de l’Ontario qui se lit comme suit :

“Whereas the report of the McKendry commission, released by the Ontario Ministry of Health in December 1999, finds that Ontario is facing a shortage of over 1,000 physicians; and

“Whereas at least 286 international medical graduates in Ontario have successfully completed the Medical Council of Canada evaluating exam, demonstrating competence in clinical knowledge; and

“Whereas the number of Ministry of Health funded post-graduate positions in ‘pool B’ (that is, international medical graduates) has been reduced from 289 to 81 since 1994; and

“Whereas the Council of Ontario Faculties of Medicine has indicated that they have the capacity to absorb an increase in the number of entry-level post-graduate positions, as long as sufficient resources are provided to support the increase; and

“Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario unanimously passed private member’s resolution 6 on November 25, 1999, which held that the government of Ontario should implement a plan to improve access to professions and trades for foreign-trained professionals,

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care as follows:

“(a) to restore the number of Ministry of Health funded post-graduate positions for international medical graduates to at least 1994 levels;

“(b) to increase immediately the number of entry-level post-graduate training positions to the full capacity of the Ontario faculties of medicine;

“(c) to make the increased entry-level post-graduate positions directly available to international medical graduates who have successfully completed the requisite examinations;

“(d) to develop a plan to identify alternative funding mechanisms that allow more equitable access for international physicians to the health care system in Ontario; and

“(e) to appoint a committee, with representation from the international medical graduate community, to review and dismantle the barriers which have been established to prevent international physicians from gaining fair access to licensure and practice in Ontario.”

I sign the petition.

PROTECTION OF MINORS

Mr Bob Wood (London West): I have a petition signed by 320 people.

“Whereas children are being exposed to sexually explicit materials in many commercial establishments;

“Whereas many municipalities do not have bylaws in place to protect minors and those that do vary from place to place and have failed to protect minors from unwanted exposure to sexually explicit materials;

“Whereas uniform standards are needed in Ontario that would make it illegal to sell, rent, loan or display sexually explicit materials to minors;

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

“To pass Bill 95, Protection of Minors from Sexually Explicit Goods and Services Act, 2000, as soon as possible.”

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): A petition 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 the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and, therefore, that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; 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 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.”

I’m in full support and have affixed my signature hereto.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In accordance with the House rules, I’d like to rise in my place and correct, for the record, a statement I made yesterday in the House. During question period I indicated there was about \$800,000 in new and expanded programs for persons with disabilities. In fact, that number is \$800 million of new and expanded programs by our government.

I appreciate the opportunity to correct the record.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I thank the minister for correcting the record.

1510

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent of the House that we now suspend proceedings until 4 o’clock, at which time the budget will be presented

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Agreed?

Interjection: No.

The Speaker: Just so you know, if there is not unanimous consent, the Minister of Finance does not need to read the speech in here. The government also does not need to call the motion for debate until the end of the session and there could be no debate on the budget.

Is there unanimous consent? I’m afraid I heard a no.

Orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I would like a short, five-minute recess to prepare the minister and the staff for debate of other government legislation, if I may.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We’re into orders of the day. It’s for the government to call an order or for the House to adjourn until tomorrow.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Under the unusual circumstances, I would like to confer for a moment, if I could.

Government House leader?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Mr Speaker, we would like to call G19, resuming debate on the motion for second reading

of Bill 19, An Act to amend the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act.

ONTARIO STUDENT LOAN
HARMONIZATION ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001 SUR L'HARMONISATION
DES PRÊTS D'ÉTUDES DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 7, 2001, on the motion for second reading of Bill 19, An Act to amend the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act / Projet de loi 19, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le ministère de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): I rise today in support of this legislation. It helps the students access financial assistance to attend college or university. Ensuring there is space and financial support for every willing and qualified Ontario student is important to the government. Since taking office, we have taken several concrete steps to ensure accessible and sustainable public post-secondary education in our province.

The member from Trinity-Spadina spoke yesterday about the double cohort. I'm pleased to address some of those concerns. For anybody watching who is not familiar with this term, "double cohort" refers to the unusually large number of students who will be entering studies in 2003 as a result of the elimination of grade 13 in Ontario.

The member from Trinity-Spadina seemed to be unaware of the government's significant investments to address the issue, although I understand that for partisan reasons he may not want to draw too much attention to them. I should point out that because of the record growth Ontario is experiencing, the government is not only concerned with the double cohort years but is anticipating growth in enrolment over the next decade.

I admit that, had the Liberals or the NDP stayed in power, they would likely never have had to face the problem of rapid growth in colleges and universities. But the province's strong economy and high standard of living have meant a growing population, and managing that growth and ensuring sustainability over the long term is a priority of this government. I'm pleased to provide factual information on our government's work to address the growing number of students in this province.

This government has addressed the challenge of growing enrolments by making the largest investment in post-secondary education in more than 30 years. Over \$1 billion has been invested to ensure the sustainability and capacity of public colleges and universities in our province. When you add the contributions from institutions and private donors to this initiative, the total value of investments in space for new students is \$1.8 billion and will make new room for 73,000 students in public colleges and universities in every region of Ontario.

As other members have pointed out, 59 construction projects are moving ahead at campuses across our

province due to this historic investment. The construction cranes rising over every campus in every region of this province are the best rebuttal against the groundless charges from the opposition, particularly the NDP, that nothing is being done to plan for future growth.

But being Conservatives, we understand how intelligently you spend is as important as how much you spend. Taxpayers' dollars should be spent efficiently and effectively. We have clearly done that, and in this case particularly.

Funds were awarded through a competition and were evaluated based on four criteria: (1) How many spaces for new students can you create if you receive funding? (2) How much financial support from other sources do you have for this project? (3) How strong is the demand for the programs you will offer if this project receives public funds? (4) What is this project's contribution to the long-term economic strength of the community?

This is not how previous governments did business, but thankfully we had an accountable process and we were able to find the best projects that would make the most efficient use of taxpayers' dollars.

With regard to facilities renewal, the government is taking concrete steps to ensure that existing buildings are maintained and kept up to date so students can enjoy the highest quality of education. Last year we made an additional \$95-million investment for modernization and renewal that will allow colleges and universities to upgrade their existing facilities. This was a 35% increase in funding over the previous year and the single largest investment in the facilities renewal program since this initiative began in 1986.

To ensure that plans for the double cohort are coordinated and well-managed, the government is working with Ontario's post-secondary institutions to prepare for the effects of this increased demand. The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities has been working with a group of ministry, university and college representatives through the Working Group on Post-Secondary Capacity and Increased Enrolment. In fact, this group has been meeting to address the challenges we face due to increased enrolment since the spring of 1999.

On the subject of operating grants, our commitment to provide a place for every willing and qualified Ontario student in college or university takes into account the future pressures facing post-secondary education in our province.

To help post-secondary institutions face the pressures of increased enrolment, we increased operating funding by \$103 million this year. This spending increase includes support for an additional 500 spaces in teacher education and 40 more spaces in medical schools across Ontario. Our commitment to continually examine operating funding to ensure it meets the demands of increased enrolment remains, and we will continue to consult with colleges and universities to ensure we are meeting our commitments.

Mr Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent to recess the House so that the budget may be presented.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The member for Brampton Centre has requested unanimous consent. Is there consent? There is not consent.

Mr Spina: I want to address the concerns of some members that post-secondary education is becoming less accessible for Ontario students. Members of the opposition spoke of the results of a poll commissioned by the Canadian Union of Public Employees—I'm not sure why they got involved in this, but nevertheless they did—and the Ontario College of University Faculty Associations, which truly does have an interest in this issue.

Our government has stated repeatedly that we will ensure a place for every willing and qualified Ontario student in college or university. This is a government that keeps its promises.

I am pleased to inform the House that we have the highest rate of participation in post-secondary education in Ontario's history. This year 36% of 18- to 24-year-olds are attending a post-secondary institution in our province.

1520

According to the OECD, Ontario has the highest rate of participation in colleges and universities of any industrialized nation on earth. In fact, there are more students attending college and university this year than there were in 1995.

It seems self-evident to me that if more students are attending college or university and enrolment keeps growing, then the system clearly must be accessible. I suspect this has something to do with our cap on tuition increases or our investment in new spaces or perhaps our new initiatives in student aid such as are included in this bill, including the legislation here.

As members know, this government has announced a five-year tuition fee policy that permits the lowest fee increases since the late 1970s. Institutions are restricted to a 2% annual increase over the average from the previous year and cannot compound year-over-year increases. This policy not only keeps tuition rates low but also allows parents and students to reliably plan for the cost of post-secondary education.

I point out that under our policy no institution is required to raise tuition fees.

To improve accessibility, we have launched many initiatives to increase the support available to students in the province. By passing this bill, we will be taking an important step to further improve accessibility, and I call on all members to support it. As I said at the outset, motivation and academic accomplishments of students should be the important factors in determining who can study at college or university. I'm encouraged by the increasing number of students pursuing college or university education, as they are proof that the post-secondary education system remains accessible.

As an alumnus of the University of Windsor and as a person who used the OSAP program in getting through school, I'm extremely proud of the fact that the system works and continues to deliver high-quality education and accessible services to the students of this province,

and I'm very proud of the initiatives that have been taken by this government.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I'm pleased to respond to the member from Brampton Centre. The member from Brampton Centre made a comment that the construction cranes may be rising, but certainly we've witnessed across this province the destruction of the bulldozers moving in for what you've done to post-secondary education in this province.

You talked about tuition costs and that universities aren't required to raise tuition, that you haven't done that, but because you've cut back on your operating grants, universities have been forced to raise their tuition costs. One only needs to look at the University of Western Ontario. I'm a proud alumnus of UWO. Western has had to raise its tuition costs for its medical school program by 40%. The main reason for that tremendous rise in the cost of tuition for medical school at UWO has been a lack of operating grants provided to the university by the Harris government.

We're hopefully going to have a budget in front of us today, and I hope there is good news in there for the post-secondary institutions of this province, be they colleges or universities. They've been starved by this government, and we need to see a commitment by the government for financial support for these universities.

You talk about accessibility. I agree accessibility is important, but again, what we're seeing as a result of the lowering of operating grants to universities and the rising tuition costs is that it's making it more difficult for individuals to gain accessibility. Even if they do have the OSAP grant available to them, what you're doing, though, in a behind-the-scenes way, is raising the student debt load. I don't think it's acceptable for students leaving a post-secondary institution that the legacy of the Harris government is an increased debt load.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): The member from Brampton Centre referred to a study that was done by Ipsos-Reid and he said "just commissioned by OPSEU," as if to say—

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): CUPE, he said.

Mr Marchese: Oh, CUPE, he said—as if to suggest that CUPE—

Interjection

Mr Marchese: Just another union—as if to suggest that because of the fact they commissioned it, this poll has no significance. But the point is that the Ipsos-Reid poll was commissioned by the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations; the Canadian Federation of Students—Ontario; the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, OPSEU; and the Canadian Union of Public Employees, CUPE. It is true that it includes two unions, but the fact of the matter is that this poll has been done by Ipsos-Reid and they do these, of course, with a great amount of accuracy, which you can understand, but

it doesn't matter. The point is that you're disputing the accuracy of the report, I'm assuming.

This is what it says: two thirds, 64%, of Ontarians, including a majority of decided PC voters, 53% of them—53% of your supporters—want increased provincial funding for universities and colleges even if it may mean cancelling tax cuts, and 70% of parents are concerned that kids won't be able to attend university or college even if they are qualified. The main reason? They can't afford it; 79% believe that, including decided PC voters—78%. So there are a whole lot of people out there who are so profoundly worried about your policies and so afraid their kids won't make it to college or university that they're saying to invest in the university system to give hope to the kids so that they'll be able to get there. Otherwise, they're saying, they may not get to a college or university. You've got to at least listen to your Tory supporters, if no one else.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I am always happy to support the member from Brampton Centre, alumnus of the University of Windsor. I always sort of relate things to my own experience. My daughter is in her fourth year in business, and I think that's what Mr Spina took—a great school.

Kids and opportunities are really what Bill 19 is about. There are those on the other side—the member from Trinity-Spadina has spoken passionately on the issue. Most of his information has been, I think, not presenting a true case of providing the opportunity for the students of Ontario. The member from Elgin-Middlesex-London used the typical Liberal term “tax and spend.” Basically what they want to do is raise taxes, and that's clear. But as a parent of five children, I think it's a joint responsibility. The province should be there and certainly the individuals should be there. I suspect in some area the federal government should be there, on the research side as well.

We're looking at the double cohort. The number of students entering post-secondary is going to double and that's of serious concern to my constituents, and I think to you, Mr Speaker, perhaps for your grandchildren. The SuperBuild fund has committed over \$1.8 billion with our partners to provide 73,000 net new spaces for university and post-secondary. I'm so proud to say that Durham College got, I think, over \$20 million of that to become Durham College and University Centre. It's the way we are approaching it.

Dianne Cunningham, our minister, I believe is using the right tools, the key performance indicators, and then publishing those indicators so students know what the success rate is, what their investment is really buying for them. It is that approach, rather than continuously pouring more money on every problem, providing the right information at the right time so students and their families have the right decision for their future.

I think it's the right thing. I'm disappointed by the opposition and the third party.

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): The member from Brampton Centre makes two interesting points. First, he says that no institution is forced to increase tuition fees

across Ontario, and second, he says that there is total accessibility in terms of any student being able to attend a post-secondary institution. On both counts he is somewhat skewed. We know what the facts are. What are they?

Number one, last year tuition fees rose dramatically right across Ontario, and that of course means that many students are unable to attend. That brings us to the second point, and that is the point of accessibility. How can you talk about accessibility if you raise tuition fees, and in turn add a debt load to students, so that when they graduate they have to pay this money back? In some cases, we know, the debt load is over \$40,000. If you want cases, I'm able to provide them for you, and so are other members in this Legislature.

1530

The other point that I found of great interest is the whole idea of simply saying that this government is spending taxpayers' money usefully and efficiently. That is interesting. I cannot think of one iota that this government has added in terms of spending taxpayers' money frugally when it comes to shutting down Ontario welcome houses and cutting off some money that should go to immigrant settlement services. That can't be. That is wrong.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Brampton Centre has two minutes to respond.

Mr Spina: I'd like to thank the members from Elgin-Middlesex-London, Trinity-Spadina, Durham and Davenport for their comments. We appreciate it. It's a two-stage process, folks. First, we do the construction. We've got two years yet to get the operating funds in place. Stay tuned.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): I move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Caplan has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say “aye.”

All those opposed, say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1532 to 1602.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Mr Caplan has moved the adjournment of the debate. All those in favour will rise and remain standing.

Thank you.

All those opposed will please rise.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 87; the nays are 5.

The Speaker: The motion is carried.

2001 ONTARIO BUDGET

Hon Jim Flaherty (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by Mr Harris, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I would beg the indulgence of the House while the pages deliver the budget. I would ask if all the members have a copy of the budget.

Hon Mr Flaherty: Mr Speaker, the budget is balanced for the third year in a row.

It's the first time in nearly 100 years that an Ontario government has presented three consecutive balanced budgets. No other government has provided the people of Ontario with such certainty. No other government has made such responsible choices.

It is responsible to cut taxes. We propose to continue to cut taxes this year.

It is responsible to pay down debt. I am pleased to announce that in the past fiscal year we reduced our debt by the largest amount ever in the history of the province of Ontario—\$3 billion.

It is responsible to demand value for taxpayers' money. We propose to introduce sweeping reforms to hold the entire public sector more accountable to taxpayers.

We must act responsibly in order to guarantee the exceptional quality of life that the people of this province deserve.

Today we will build upon our government's action plan of 21 steps leading into the 21st century.

A plan based on fiscal responsibility, accountability and growth.

That plan is very important. It's both responsive and responsible. It speaks to the issues that people talk about at home with their families, at work with their colleagues and at social gatherings with their friends.

The initiatives that I'm announcing in today's budget stem from weeks of extensive consultations with my colleagues, business people, community organizations and other people from across the province of Ontario.

People know that we have come a long way in Ontario since 1995. They know that they're better off. People have told us that they want to preserve and build on those successes. They understand that government needs to act responsibly in order for this to happen.

The people of Ontario are asking us to think ahead and exercise discipline through strong leadership and prudent management of their money. They are asking us to focus on those things that matter to them the most.

This plan does that.

Every day, hard-working families across this province make responsible decisions about their own budgets. They expect governments to do the same thing, even when those decisions are difficult.

Government should not be afraid to venture into new territory. Government should embrace the innovation demonstrated by so many successful small businesses and look at new ways of doing things.

This plan does that.

What I am presenting to the people of Ontario today is a clear vision for the future.

1610

There are many people who have helped in this process, and I'd like to take a few minutes to thank just a few of them.

I thank our Premier, Mike Harris, for his support and unparalleled leadership. I deeply value his dedication to building on our strengths in Ontario.

I'd also like to thank all of my caucus and cabinet colleagues for their input and advice over the past 12 weeks, and especially my parliamentary assistants, Ernie Hardeman and John O'Toole, for dedicating so much of their time and effort over these past 12 weeks to our pre-budget consultations.

I'd also like to give special thanks to the very dedicated and talented staff at the Ministry of Finance. They're the people who worked tremendously long hours, sacrificing time with their friends and families, to make this budget a reality. I'd especially like to acknowledge my deputy minister, Bob Christie; the assistant deputy minister, Gabriel Sékaly; my chief of staff, Bronwen Evans; and the rest of my staff for their hard work, patience and enthusiasm from the beginning of this process to today.

My wife, Christine Elliott, and our three children, John, Galen and Quinn, also deserve thanks for their patience and understanding and support. Hi, guys.

Finally and most importantly, the people of Ontario who provided their ideas and their advice through the process of the pre-budget consultation deserve special thanks. This budget is really for them, for all the people in Ontario who can count on a better tomorrow because of the decisions which we are making today.

So that as many people as possible have access to this speech today, it is being carried on the Internet through our Ministry of Finance Web site at gov.on.ca. Just follow the links.

Under previous governments, the philosophy was to raise taxes, to spend more of people's hard-earned money. The size and scope of government grew. High taxes and big government crippled economic growth.

In 1995, the Mike Harris government changed that. We said then, and we continue to say clearly, that tax dollars belong to the people of Ontario, not the government. The people of Ontario know that the government can't give them anything that the government hasn't taken away from them in the first place.

We believe that, given the opportunity, the hard-working people of this province will invest and spend their money in ways that will help the economy to grow. And they have. Today, the people of Ontario have more money to spend and invest as they choose, and we are all reaping the benefits.

Since 1995, our economy has grown by almost 25%. The private sector consensus is that our economy continues to grow this year at 2.3%, and growth is expected to accelerate to 3.6% in 2002. Every year for the past four years, we have matched or exceeded the consensus. I'm confident that we will exceed it again.

This outstanding growth in our economy didn't happen by accident. We had a very deliberate plan. We had confidence in the people of the province, confidence in their entrepreneurial spirit, and confidence in their desire to turn around the fortunes of this province. The people of Ontario accepted our plan and they accepted our challenge. Now the people of Ontario are sharing the dividends of this plan.

At the heart of the plan were tax cuts. Tax cuts helped make us leaders and they will help to keep us leaders.

Ontario paved the way for tax cuts in this country. I'm proud to say that every province in Canada is following our lead. The government of Nova Scotia is cutting taxes, the government of New Brunswick is cutting taxes, the government of Manitoba is cutting taxes, the government of Prince Edward Island is cutting taxes. So too are Quebec, Newfoundland, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia.

Even the federal government is cutting taxes. Finally, the federal government is recognizing that the Ontario example works. On February 18, 1999, the federal Finance Minister, Paul Martin, said this in the House of Commons: "Overwhelmingly, the best thing one can do for low-income families is to make sure that they either pay very low taxes or no taxes at all."

In Ontario, we have told 660,000 lower-income earners that we don't want their income tax money. With the changes proposed in this budget, an additional 75,000 people would pay no Ontario income tax. We believe they should keep that money for themselves and their families. Yet these same 735,000 lower-income earners would continue to pay income tax to the federal government.

Think about how much better off these families would be if they didn't pay any income tax at all. So we challenge the federal government to match Ontario's income tax cuts for the lowest income earners of this province and this country. It's the responsible thing to do.

I am pleased to announce today another promise kept to the taxpayers of Ontario. We propose to complete our 20% personal income tax cut promised in 1999. Ninety-five per cent of taxpayers—virtually everyone earning less than \$100,000 a year—would see a cut of at least 20%.

Our tax cuts since 1995 mean that a family of four—two working parents and two children—with an income of \$60,000 would pay about \$2,300 less in Ontario personal income tax. That's money to spend on a new computer, it's almost four months' worth of groceries, or a year's tuition at a community college—money to spend as they choose.

Our government has returned money to all taxpayers in this province. People at the lower end of the income scale have seen the biggest percentage cuts. We are proud of the steps we have taken over the years to return money to people with lower incomes.

It's time now to look more closely at how much tax is paid by middle-class families in Ontario. It's time to begin to eliminate the personal income surtax, a tax that

hits Ontario's taxpayers with incomes that start at \$54,000. People at this income level are by no means rich. This tax is an unnecessary burden on thousands of middle-class families.

We're proposing to eliminate this surtax for more than 340,000 people, and that's just the first step. I suspect our critics will once again question whether middle-class families deserve such a tax cut. They will ask us today the same question they asked in 1995: is now the right time for tax cuts? They will ask, can we afford to cut taxes? I ask them this: can we afford not to cut taxes?

Since we started cutting taxes, our tax revenues have increased by more than \$15 billion. Since we started cutting taxes, our businesses have created more than 822,000 jobs. That's enough jobs to employ the combined populations of Hamilton, Kitchener, Windsor and Sudbury. Since we started cutting taxes, business investment in this province has increased by 66%. Our economy is better for it; our people are better for it.

1620

Our tax cuts benefit the people of Ontario no matter what part of the province they live in, no matter how much money they make, no matter what they do for a living.

They notice our personal income tax cuts in their pay stubs and when they fill out their tax returns.

They see the evidence of the tax cuts when the companies they work for expand or hire additional staff or launch a new division.

Millions of people in Ontario rely on businesses—small, medium and large—for their livelihood. I believe the first priority of every business in Ontario should be paying wages, not taxes.

That's why I'm pleased to announce today Ontario's Edge.

It's a package of initiatives aimed at keeping the businesses of this province strong and encouraging new businesses to set up shop here. Enhancing our quality of life is central to this plan's success.

The concept is simple. It's designed to help us achieve our goal that within 10 years Ontario will enjoy the best-performing economy and the highest quality of life in North America.

There are four key components to Ontario's Edge.

The significant corporate income tax cuts announced in last year's budget are the first component.

I am announcing today that we will table legislation to implement the full schedule for our corporate income tax cuts each year between now and 2005.

By 2005, Ontario would have a lower combined corporate income tax rate than any of the 50 US states. No Canadian province would have a lower general corporate income tax rate.

This move alone would make Ontario a prime destination in North America to do business.

Businesses in Ontario have told us that they need to know our schedule for cutting their taxes so they can plan ahead, so they can know how much extra money they will have each year in order to expand their businesses or

hire more people. That's why we want to give them certainty. We know from experience that they will respond positively.

The second component of Ontario's Edge is to begin to eliminate the job-killing capital tax.

Thousands of businesses across Ontario, in every sector, must pay capital tax whether they make money or not. That means capital tax claws back money that should be used to keep employees on the payroll.

Our Business Tax Review Panel told us that this tax deters foreign companies from investing here. They told us it is a cost of doing business that almost no other country imposes. I would like to thank the members of the Business Tax Review Panel and especially its chair, D'Arcy Delamere, for all of their hard work. Mr Speaker, I am pleased to announce today that we propose to follow their recommendation and take the first step toward eliminating the capital tax.

This year I will introduce legislation to give a break to all businesses that pay capital tax by raising the threshold at which it becomes payable. The first \$5 million in capital would be tax-free.

This step would relieve more than 11,000 small and medium-sized businesses in Ontario of the burden of capital tax and directly support the creation of jobs. It would create more opportunities for our businesses and our economy to grow.

The third component of Ontario's Edge is to undertake a thorough review of tax incentives.

The Business Tax Review Panel told us these incentives can make the tax system too complex.

We want to ensure that our tax incentives are effective, useful and relevant. We also believe that tax incentives for certain activities should not be a substitute for low tax rates across the board.

These first three components of Ontario's Edge are intended to build on Ontario's tax competitiveness.

As announced in the throne speech, an independent task force will monitor Ontario's productivity and compare it with our competitors. Roger Martin, who is the dean of the Joseph L. Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto, will lead the task force measuring our progress.

Mr Speaker, there is one more aspect to Ontario's Edge.

The fourth component is to build on the quality of life we hold so dear in Ontario.

When businesses come here, they bring more than employees—they bring families who make this province their home.

As a result, our communities are expanding.

There are more cars on our roads and more congestion on our highways.

Mr Speaker, today I am announcing a way to address the gridlock that is threatening to compromise the quality of life in our urban areas in Ontario.

It is important that we solve this problem.

Allow me to tell you a story I heard on a recent visit to Kanata.

I met a Canadian high-tech entrepreneur who recently moved his family and his business back to Ontario, back to Ottawa, from Silicon Valley, San Jose, California. Quite simply, he left California because he was tired of fighting traffic—tired of spending more time in his car on the freeway than at home with his family.

He said Ontario offered him a better way of life. And it does.

He also said our taxes in Ontario are now competitive.

Mr Speaker, in order to keep people like this man and his family and his business in Ontario, we must address the gridlock on our roads.

That's why I am announcing today that we will focus the remaining \$500 million of the \$1-billion SuperBuild Millennium Partnerships initiative on transportation and environmental initiatives.

We challenge our partners in the private sector and the municipal and federal levels of government to join us and invest in this important initiative.

Since 1995, our government has invested more than \$5 billion in the province's highway system. Our commitment is ongoing. We are determining how best to expand and manage our highways. As part of this exercise, SuperBuild will examine opportunities for the private sector to contribute to our highway system.

In fact, tomorrow morning SuperBuild will begin the process of calling on the private sector to complete Highway 407 East all the way to Highways 35 and 115.

Investing in transportation will take some of the pressure off our highways in Ottawa, Toronto and several of our other largest urban areas and growing regions.

We want to ensure that the high-tech entrepreneur in Kanata and all commuters, whether they're from Orangeville, Clarington, Richmond Hill or Whitby, have access to a seamless system of transportation and an excellent quality of life.

It is clear that Ontario has an edge over most other jurisdictions in North America when it comes to quality of life.

Clean air and water are important aspects of our quality of life in Ontario.

Mr Speaker, I am pleased to announce we are increasing our investment in the environment.

We will provide \$25 million more this year to ensure that our drinking water is safe and our air is clean. This means that we have increased operating funding to the Ministry of the Environment by 51% since 1997-98.

We will also continue our commitment to the natural areas protection program, which protects the beauty of the Bruce Trail, the Rouge Valley, the Lynde Marsh and the Niagara Escarpment. We will contribute \$5 million this year.

1630

Thriving arts and culture are also important aspects of our quality of life. We are devoting more \$90 million to arts and culture. This year, we are doubling our funding to the arts endowment fund, from \$5 million to \$10 million.

Clean air, good schools, efficient transportation, quality hospitals and low taxes are all part of creating a healthy and competitive business environment Ontario. When our businesses are successful, so too are the people who work for them.

The evidence is all around us. It's in the young family buying their first home. It's in the new graduate getting a meaningful job. It's in all the opportunities people in Ontario have today that they did not have before 1995.

Mr Speaker, we want the people of Ontario to continue to have the kinds of opportunities they enjoy today. We want an economy that creates the jobs they need. We also want to guarantee them continued access to good schools, caring doctors and nurses, and well-run hospitals—to the public services they value the most.

People told us that health care is their top spending priority. We listened and we responded. We have invested as no other government has before in this vital area. This year alone we are increasing health care spending by \$1.2 billion, or 5.4%. This is comparable to the average increase of 5.3% in all other provinces, excluding Alberta—

The Speaker: The House come to order, please. Sorry for the interruption, Minister of Finance.

Hon Mr Flaherty: Mr Speaker, we have kept our promise on health care spending. We have increased our investment in health care by almost \$6 billion since we came to office. The federal government, on the other hand, is providing less to health care in Ontario today than it did back then. Incredible as it may seem, Ontario has been paying 100% of the increase in health care costs with no help from Ottawa.

Instead, the federal government is poised to show a surplus of nearly \$20 billion for 2000-01. Surely the federal government could invest some of this money in health care.

Mr Speaker, we have exceeded our Blueprint commitment on health care spending. And we will continue to invest in health care to meet the needs of this province as the population grows and the population ages.

In 1995-96, 38 cents of every dollar that we spent on programs went to health care. This year it will be 45 cents.

Today we are spending \$745 per second on health care—\$745 each and every second in the province of Ontario. In one minute, that adds up to nearly \$45,000—more than some families earn in a year. In the time it takes to deliver this speech, we will have spent more than \$2 million on health care.

Sir John A. Macdonald was fond of reminding his colleagues to “look a little ahead....” Well, when we look ahead five short years, we could see health care consuming 60 cents of every dollar we spend on programs.

We cannot continue to increase our spending on health care at this rate. It's simply not sustainable.

The Fyke Commission on Medicare in Saskatchewan put it bluntly. They said, “Poor organization, weak accountability, and especially the lack of quality and fair-

ness—not money—are the main shortcomings of the health care system.”

Ontario is not alone in this dilemma.

There is not a single province in Canada that isn't faced with spiralling health care costs.

The facts speak for themselves. What we need now is leadership.

The Ontario government believes that fundamental reform is necessary to save Canada's health care system. Reform on two fronts. The first is the way the federal government funds health care. I call upon the federal government to provide its fair share—50% of all health care funding increases.

Interjection.

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

The member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale, come to order. This is his last warning. I don't know if anybody has ever been kicked out in the budget, but you're going to be the first; last warning to you.

Sorry for the interruption, Minister of Finance.

Hon Mr Flaherty: The second reform is to make the system work better.

We must act now. And we must act together. Mr Speaker, this is a discussion that must move beyond the walls of this Legislature.

That is why I am calling on all members of the Legislature to take this debate into their communities—directly to the people of Ontario.

Members of our caucus will meet with their constituents. They will gather ideas. We want to have an open and honest dialogue with people about the future of health care.

At the same time, we will ask our partners in the health care system—doctors, nurses, patients and administrators—to help us identify the best ways to deliver quality health care.

We must take a common-sense approach to health care. We must be responsible and look at all options to help us get to our goal of reliable, high-quality health care.

We encourage the federal government to take this issue quickly to mind and to take it seriously.

Mr Speaker, the people of this province and this country cannot wait 18 months for Mr Romanow to deliver his report.

It may be that the federal government does not feel the same urgency that we do.

When your financial stake in the debate is less than 14 cents on the dollar, it may be easier to procrastinate.

Wasting time does not serve the people of Ontario who depend on our health care system. People need to know that when their child is sick, he or she will see a doctor. When their elderly mother breaks a hip, she will get the care she needs. When they need an annual checkup, they will get one.

Mr Speaker, one of the first steps in health care reform is accountability.

The people of Ontario have a right to know that they are getting value for the money they invest in health care. That not a penny is misspent.

That is the responsible thing to do. We intend to introduce legislation that will require hospitals to balance their budgets each year.

We will showcase the achievements of the most efficient hospitals.

For too long in this province we have rewarded poor performance by funding hospital deficits each year. There is no incentive to achieve better results. That is why we intend to encourage all hospitals to strive for excellence and efficiency.

We must be accountable for every dollar of taxpayer money that we spend—whether it goes to a hospital, a doctor, a community care access centre, or any other health care provider.

Last year, of every dollar that we spent on programs and capital, more than 80 cents went to individuals and organizations in the broader public sector.

Mr Speaker, that is why hospitals, school boards, municipalities, social service agencies, colleges and universities must be accountable to the taxpayers of Ontario for the money that they spend.

The need for more accountability in the entire public sector was expressed to me by the Ontario Financial Review Commission. I would like to thank the members of the commission and its chair, Bob Lord, for all of their hard work.

Our government has set the bar on accountability. We made it against the law in Ontario for the government to run a deficit, forcing future governments to employ the same fiscal prudence that we have. Cabinet ministers face a real penalty for failure: a cut in their salary.

Today I want to raise that bar.

Mr Speaker, we are proposing to introduce a new Public Sector Accountability Act.

It would require all major organizations that receive taxpayer dollars from our government to balance their budgets each year. That is accountability to the taxpayers who fund them.

1640

But accountability does not end when the books are balanced. True accountability goes far beyond the numbers. Public sector organizations would have to issue plans to show what their objectives are and track their progress against those plans.

They would identify and demonstrate areas where they excel and cite areas where there is need for improvement. They would report on their progress in finding new ways of delivering services. They would look for areas where the private sector could do a better job. And they would report on their efforts to find ongoing efficiencies.

We challenge them to show courage, to focus on services that are the most valuable to the people of Ontario, to eliminate programs that are outdated and that no longer serve their original purpose.

We will call on experts in the private sector to form a panel to review the role of government in the 21st

century. This panel will start a public discussion on where government does and does not belong.

We will be undertaking a value-for-money review of all government spending. It will rely on private sector expertise in carrying out its work. This review will answer common sense questions when assessing any government program or service, questions like: is the service meeting its original objectives? How important is the service? Who should be delivering it?

This value-for-money review will direct us to wasteful activities that could be eliminated. It will generate savings to invest in our highest priorities.

In order to launch this process, I am pleased to announce today that the province is getting out of the banking business. We are seeking a buyer for the Province of Ontario Savings Office. It is clear the private sector has more expertise than we do when it comes to running a bank.

The recent lease of the Bruce nuclear facility is another example of providing value for money to Ontario's taxpayers. Simply put, there was a need for investment at the Bruce nuclear facility to improve its performance without jeopardizing safety. Bruce Power, a private sector consortium, answered our call, leasing the facility from Ontario Power Generation.

This is the kind of cost-effective solution that leads to greater value for electricity customers and taxpayers alike. Bruce Power's success encourages us to seek other avenues of private sector expertise, other ways to increase value to customers and value to taxpayers.

I believe that no other jurisdiction in North America is so active in pursuing value for taxpayers' money. We owe this to the people of Ontario.

It is a priority for this government to care for the most vulnerable people in our society: people who are unable to work because of disability or disease; people who are at risk of violence. Supporting our most vulnerable people is perhaps the most responsible thing we can do. It is our duty as a government.

Aging parents of adult children with developmental disabilities should not have to worry about where their children will live when they are gone, or who will provide for them when they no longer can.

I am confident that every member of this House has encountered families in this very difficult situation. We can only begin to understand the challenges these families face. That is why I am announcing that we will invest \$67 million over five years to construct new facilities for adults with developmental disabilities.

In addition, we will provide \$55 million this year, growing to nearly \$200 million by 2006-07, to enhance services for people with developmental disabilities and attract more quality caregivers. We recognize that these dedicated workers deserve our support.

I would like to thank the Ontario Association for Community Living for its advice in determining the best means of supporting adults with developmental disabilities.

Children with severe disabilities have the same right to live with dignity and comfort as do other children. The province's network of children's treatment centres is often an essential support in these children's lives. They provide a wide range of valuable services to children with cerebral palsy, spina bifida, autism, brain injuries and developmental learning disabilities.

It is the responsibility of government and our society at large to provide as much as we can for these children and their families. That is why I am announcing a \$20-million annual increase in funding for children's treatment centres. That is a 40% annual increase.

Today in Ontario no woman or child should have to tolerate domestic violence or live in fear of an abusive family member. That is why I am announcing that we will spend \$26 million over the next four years to create 300 new beds in shelters across Ontario. We will also provide \$9 million annually for counselling and other support.

This budget also includes other measures to ensure the safety of people and communities.

For example, we will double the number of youth justice committees from 18 to 36. In these youth justice committees, non-violent young offenders face probing examinations of why they did what they did, what's going on in their lives, how it affects the community and how that young offender can make up for it.

Intervening in the lives of non-violent young offenders and holding them accountable for their actions in a meaningful way is one of the most important things we can do for these young people. Active intervention by the community actually makes a difference in the lives of these young people. All of us benefit if we can prevent them from graduating to more serious crimes.

It is up to government to ensure vulnerable people in our society have our support. That is what we are doing. We believe that is the role of a responsible government.

Building growth in our economy requires an investment in our people. Our young people are perhaps our biggest resource.

This government has invested strongly in the well-being of children and young people from the moment they take their first steps to the day they start their first job.

A foundation of our approach is to invest in programs that reach children in their earliest years, when finding and fixing problems does the most good. I am very pleased today to announce that we will increase our investment in early years programs by \$114 million this year, growing to \$193 million.

This action builds on a solid base of programs that support families and help children before they enter school. These programs reach children early to ensure healthier growth later. A key new initiative will be a system of local early years centres throughout the province for children and their parents.

Our throne speech set out a vision for education in this province—a vision of high standards for students and more choice for parents.

Excellence and investment in our public education system pay dividends in the future. Since 1995 we have increased education spending from \$12.9 billion to almost \$14 billion, which is more than required to meet enrolment growth.

I am pleased to announce today that our allocation for the publicly funded school system will increase by \$360 million this year.

1650

This funding will ensure that students, whether they go to a public, Catholic or francophone school, have the tools they need to succeed. We are firmly committed to a quality publicly funded education system. We will continue to make new investments in the publicly funded education system to improve the quality of education in Ontario.

In addition, for years we've heard from parents who want their children educated in their own culture and religion. Some parents feel the only way to do that is to send their children to an independent school. For many, the cost is prohibitive.

While we continue to provide increased funding to our public education system, we believe it is now time to address the concerns of these parents. Over the next five years, we propose to phase in a partial tax credit for parents of children at independent schools. With this measure, Ontario would join other provinces in supporting educational choice.

Would the House come to order, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Would the member for Timmins-James Bay come to order. This is his last warning.

Sorry, Minister of Finance.

Hon Mr Flaherty: I often tell young people that the best investment they can make is in their own education. As a government, we believe it is one of the best investments we can make for the future of this province.

That is why I am pleased to announce one of the largest investments ever made in Ontario's post-secondary education system. In the fall of 2003, a record number of new university and college students will arrive on campus. There are three reasons for this. First of all—and this is good news—more young people are pursuing higher education than in the past. Secondly, the baby-boom echo will cause the numbers to swell. Thirdly, all grade 12 and OAC students graduate together for the first time in 2003—the double cohort. These are landmark events in our education system. They demand a landmark response.

Today I am pleased to announce that we are providing certainty to each and every one of these students, and their parents, that there will be a place for them in an Ontario college or university. Through our SuperBuild Corp, we have already committed to constructing 73,000 new student spaces. Today I am announcing the next step. We will increase our support for colleges and universities by a projected \$293 million in 2003-04.

Government is planning ahead so that our colleges and universities can plan ahead with a clear funding frame-

work in place. We are taking the extraordinary step of committing today to the level of funding we will provide to post-secondary institutions over the next three years. We are providing them with the certainty they need to be able to plan for 2003.

Preparing for the influx of post-secondary students we are expecting in the coming years isn't just about money. We must continue to find creative ways to educate our young people, to prepare them for the working world beyond college and beyond university, to pinpoint the skills they need to get a job and provide courses that teach those skills. I am pleased to announce an exciting new venture in post-secondary education. We have invested \$60 million in the Ontario Institute of Technology, a new university to be located on the campus of Durham College. The OIT will focus on providing students with a seamless transition among college and university programs. It will provide one-stop shopping for students looking for a mix of academic and hands-on experience.

The responsible choices we make today guarantee tomorrow's prosperity. There is no question there are challenges ahead, and there's no question we are the government to tackle those challenges.

Our plan is a solid one: cut taxes for growth, spend accountably, spend responsibly. Our plan is common sense.

Our plan does not end with this budget. We must not be complacent. We must continue to be responsive to the needs of the people of this province. We must continue to make responsible choices on their behalf. We must continue to focus on our pledge to make Ontario the best place to live, work and raise a family in the 21st century.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Mr Speaker, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Mr Duncan has moved adjournment of the debate.

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

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

RESPONSIBLE CHOICES FOR GROWTH AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT (2001 BUDGET), 2001

LOI DE 2001 SUR DES CHOIX RÉFLÉCHIS FAVORISANT LA CROISSANCE ET LA RESPONSABILISATION (BUDGET DE 2001)

Mr Flaherty moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 45, An Act to implement measures contained in the 2001 Budget and to amend various statutes / Projet de loi 45, Loi mettant en oeuvre des mesures mentionnées dans le budget de 2001 et modifiant diverses lois.

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

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

The minister for a short statement?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): The bill fulfills many of the commitments that are in the budget speech.

PUBLIC SECTOR ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001 SUR LA RESPONSABILISATION DU SECTEUR PUBLIC

Mr Flaherty moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 46, An Act respecting the accountability of public sector organizations / Projet de loi 46, Loi portant sur la responsabilisation des organismes publics.

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

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1700 to 1705.

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

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hastings, John	Runciman, Robert W.
Baird, John R.	Hodgson, Chris	Sampson, Rob
Barrett, Toby	Hudak, Tim	Snobelen, John
Chudleigh, Ted	Jackson, Cameron	Spina, Joseph
Clark, Brad	Johns, Helen	Sterling, Norman W.
Clement, Tony	Johnson, Bert	Stewart, R. Gary
Coburn, Brian	Kells, Morley	Stockwell, Chris
Cunningham, Dianne	Klees, Frank	Tascona, Joseph N.
DeFaria, Carl	Marland, Margaret	Tilson, David
Ecker, Janet	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tsubouchi, David H.
Elliott, Brenda	Maves, Bart	Turnbull, David
Flaherty, Jim	Mazzilli, Frank	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Galt, Doug	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Gilchrist, Steve	Molinari, Tina R.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gill, Raminder	Munro, Julia	Wood, Bob
Guzzo, Garry J.	Mushinski, Marilyn	Young, David
Hardeman, Ernie	Newman, Dan	
Harris, Michael D.	O'Toole, John	

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

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Curling, Alvin	Marchese, Rosario
Bisson, Gilles	Di Cocco, Caroline	Martel, Shelley

Bountrogianni, Marie	Dombrowsky, Leona	Martin, Tony
Boyer, Claudette	Duncan, Dwight	McMeekin, Ted
Bradley, James J.	Gerretsen, John	Parsons, Ernie
Bryant, Michael	Hampton, Howard	Peters, Steve
Caplan, David	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Christopherson, David	Kennedy, Gerard	Pupatello, Sandra
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter	Ruprecht, Tony
Cleary, John C.	Kwinter, Monte	Sergio, Mario
Conway, Sean G.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Smitherman, George
Cordiano, Joseph	Lankin, Frances	
Crozier, Bruce	Levac, David	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 52; the nays are 37.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

This House stands adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1709.

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

Estimates / Budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Gerard Kennedy
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Alvin Curling
Gilles Bisson, Alvin Curling,
Gerard Kennedy, Frank Mazzilli,
Norm Miller, John R. O'Toole,
Steve Peters, Wayne Wettlaufer
Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

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

Chair / Président: Marcel Beaubien
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Doug Galt
Marcel Beaubien, David Christopherson,
Doug Galt, Ernie Hardeman, Monte Kwinter,
John O'Toole, Gerry Phillips, Joseph Spina
Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

General government / Affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: Steve Gilchrist
Vice-Chair / Vice-Présidente: Vacant
Marie Bountrogianni, Ted Chudleigh,
Garfield Dunlop, Steve Gilchrist, Dave Levac,
Rosario Marchese, Norm Miller, Marilyn Mushinski
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

Government agencies / Organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: James J. Bradley
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Bruce Crozier
James J. Bradley, Bruce Crozier,
Leona Dombrowsky, Bert Johnson,
Morley Kells, Tony Martin,
Jerry J. Ouellette, Bob Wood
Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

Justice and Social Policy / Justice et affaires sociales

Chair / Présidente: Vacant
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Carl DeFaria
Toby Barrett, Marcel Beaubien,
Michael Bryant, Carl DeFaria,
Garry J. Guzzo, Peter Kormos,
Lyn McLeod, Tina R. Molinari
Clerk / Greffier: Tom Prins

Legislative Assembly / Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: R. Gary Stewart
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Vacant
Ted Arnott, Marilyn Churley,
Caroline Di Cocco, Jean-Marc Lalonde,
Margaret Marland, Jerry J. Ouellette,
R. Gary Stewart, Joseph N. Tascona,
Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

Public accounts / Comptes publics

Chair / Président: John Gerretsen
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: John C. Cleary
John C. Cleary, John Gerretsen, Raminder Gill,
John Hastings, Shelley Martel, Bart Maves,
Julia Munro, Richard Patten
Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

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

Chair / Présidente: Frances Lankin
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Garfield Dunlop,
Raminder Gill, Pat Hoy, Frances Lankin,
Frank Mazzilli, Ted McMeekin, Bill Murdoch
Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

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