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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 26 October 1999

Mardi 26 octobre 1999

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
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Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 26 October 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 26 octobre 1999

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HEALTH CARE

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): We have yet another health crisis that could have easily been avoided. An ophthalmologist in Sarnia is so frustrated with the Ministry of Health that he is closing his doors in the underserved area of Lambton county. This closing will affect 4,000 to 5,000 patient visits, mostly people who are elderly and in need of an eye specialist.

This closure is a direct consequence of a boundary change affecting cap exemptions. The Ministry of Health is forcing hundreds of patients to travel 100 kilometres or more for needed eye surgery that could be provided in their own community. There is an unnecessary hardship being imposed on hundreds of frail and elderly patients and their families by the Ministry of Health. This is a prime example where the inflexibility of the Ministry of Health is causing distress and great anxiety to hundreds of people with cataracts, glaucoma and other eye disease.

My repeated attempts to contact the minister and her senior staff since October 7 have to date been unsuccessful. I will be presenting a petition to this House signed by hundreds of affected people.

This is yet another example of arrogance, whereby this government is not serving, is not listening and is not responding to the needs of people in this province.

ONTARIO AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I want to call to the attention of the House to the fact that this year, 1999, marks the 125th anniversary of the Ontario Agricultural College in Guelph. I had the opportunity this spring to attend the 50th anniversary of the OAC, as it is known, class of '49, of which my father is a member.

Founded in 1874, the Ontario Agricultural College has contributed greatly to the development of agriculture and our world's agri-food system. OAC has provided leadership in research, teaching and innovation not only for Ontario's farmers but also for farmers around the world.

The innovations that OAC pioneered are truly amazing: from breeding livestock to improved wheat production to safe use of pesticides.

OAC published a book commemorating its 125th anniversary this year, detailing 125 accomplishments of the college. These stories represent OAC's innovation in agriculture and attempt to give a snapshot of how these breakthroughs have improved everyone's quality of life.

OAC grew in 1964 into the University of Guelph, following the vision of the then president, J. D. McLaughlan.

I congratulate OAC on their past achievements, wish them the best of luck and, as a former graduate, I saw first-hand what teachers and students have accomplished at this university.

HIGHWAY 403

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): Recently, I met with the Brantford Regional Chamber of Commerce and had the opportunity to share some thoughts about Brantford people with this dedicated group of industry, commerce and business leaders.

It was brought to my attention that, before my election, a request was presented to the former Minister of Transportation. This was coordinated by the chamber of commerce and spearheaded by the Brant County Ambulance Service.

The request was for a turnaround to be placed along the new stretch of Highway 403 between Brant and Ancaster. This will result in better accessibility for emergency vehicles and improving possible life-saving time.

This reasonable request was sponsored by the Brant County Ambulance Service, the Brant detachment of the OPP, the Brant County Fire Department, the Brantford Police Services and the Brantford Fire Department. At present, leaving from Brantford, an emergency vehicle must travel 6.5 kilometres toward Ancaster before the nearest turnaround is reached.

This means the ambulance driver will stop at the scene of an emergency on the opposite side of the highway and drop off the attendants, who then scurry across the median to attend to the injured, then wait for the ambulance to arrive from its long trip turnaround. This two-way trip takes approximately seven minutes and eight seconds. Saving seconds is crucial.

RAIL SERVICE

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I want to bring to the attention of the south and particularly to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, who is listening attentively to this, the recommendation brought forward by a committee to the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission about reducing train services in northeastern Ontario.

As many people know, the Ontario Northland is the only train running in the northeastern corridor up Highway 11, making the connection from Toronto all the way to Moosonee. There has been a recommendation by a committee to the commission to either reduce the train down to three days per week, from the current six trips we have to and from Toronto per week, or to eliminate the service all together.

I am here to say that neither of those two options is acceptable to anybody along the Highway 11 corridor. We already have very minimal train services. For this government to allow the ONTC to go ahead and reduce or eliminate services is totally not acceptable.

I call on the provincial government to do what every other government has done up to now, and that is to show the confidence of the people of northeastern Ontario by restoring the subsidy that was paid to the ONR to make sure they have the dollars to operate the train services; or at the very least, if they're not prepared to do that, to sit down with those of us in northeastern Ontario who have some contributions to give about how we can turn this train service around and make it profitable and make sure it's there for the people of northeastern Ontario.

KYLE PETTEY

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I rise in the House today to recognize the achievements of Kyle Pettey, a successful athlete and resident of Northumberland.

At 16 years of age, Kyle is one of Canada's top athletes, who is moving one step closer to the Year 2000 Paralympics in Australia by participating in the Southern Cross World Games. The physical hurdles in his life, which include being diagnosed with cerebral palsy and breaking his back in a farming accident, have not stopped Kyle from setting impressive records in the shot put and discus throw.

Some of his other recent successes, under his coach, John Potts, involve setting four Canadian records for the discus throw, winning all his regional competitions and earning a silver medal for the shot put at both the Canadian and provincial championships.

At this moment, Kyle is in Australia, attempting to set a new world record at the Southern Cross World Games.

It was Robert Browning who said, "A man's reach should exceed his grasp." Kyle Pettey is a young man who has reached beyond the limits and has proven that dreams can come true if you believe in yourself. He has become Northumberland's magic man.

I applaud him for his success and extend my warmest wishes to Kyle, his coach and his family.

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WORLD OSTEOPOROSIS MONTH

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): Next month is World Osteoporosis Month. Present today in the gallery are nine women who are advocates for action to both treat and prevent the crippling effects of this disease. Some 600,000 women in Ontario, one in four women over the age of 50, are affected by osteoporosis; one in two women over 65 will have the disease. Millions of dollars are spent every year to provide chronic and long-term care for women crippled by osteoporosis and yet, tragically, less than 2% of the dollars that are spent go to drug therapies that can prevent the debilitating fractures.

This government will make platitudinous statements about their concerns, for after all, this truly is a motherhood issue if there ever was one. But they refuse to acknowledge the problems that they themselves are creating by continuing to block access to drug therapies that are proven to be effective in reducing fractures. Women with osteoporosis should have access to a choice of therapies that give them the best chance of continuing to live full and productive lives. But here again, you only get access to the best health care if you can afford to pay for it. Women who are poor don't get this best chance.

A man started a hunger strike outside the Ontario Legislature yesterday to protest this government's handling of requests for special approvals under the Ontario drug benefits plan. He is not alone in his experience or his concern. Physicians seeking the best treatment for women with osteoporosis have been constantly frustrated by delays and denials.

It is time to stop rationing access to health care in the back rooms of government.

WOMEN'S INSTITUTES

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I rise in the House today to offer my congratulations to groups of people in my riding who have been making a difference in their communities for generations. Women's institutes play an important role in the growth and development of rural communities throughout Ontario. Their programs are dedicated to strengthening the family. They promote good family life skills and support projects such as recycling, improving parenting skills and encouraging responsible citizenship.

For over 100 years, women's institute members throughout Ontario have been quietly, actively working together for family, home, community and country. Women's institutes in Perth-Middlesex have been living up to this commitment and are key in supporting local 4-H clubs by helping to teach about bookkeeping and computers. They also conduct numerous programs and activities for local nursing homes, as well as volunteering their help when needed. This is an excellent example of how the people of Perth-Middlesex work together to

provide within their communities and across the province. It's also evidence that Ontario can be prosperous without government intervention. No government funding goes to women's institutes.

Tomorrow, the Avonton Women's Institute celebrates its 75th anniversary of strengthening the communities of Perth-Middlesex. It's my pleasure to stand in the House today and applaud yet another example of the people of the great riding of Perth-Middlesex working together to improve Ontario.

HEALTH CARE

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): Virtually every member in this House is well aware of the serious shortage of physicians in this province. Certainly, as a member from a large riding in northern Ontario, I can tell you that it is approaching crisis proportions in my part of the province. In fact, in Thunder Bay, the provision of 24-hour emergency service at our acute care hospital sites is in great peril because of this crisis.

But what concerns me is the government's casual and arrogant approach to the problem. By only making passing reference to the situation in last week's throne speech, the government sent the message that this was a long-term issue, not one that needs action now.

Yes, there are some decisions that must be made that will improve our long-term prospects for recruitment, but today I'm calling on the Premier and the Minister of Health to take action immediately to deal with this crisis.

First of all, they must eliminate the deficits presently faced by our area hospitals. These deficits are caused by previous government cutbacks, and they are tying the hands of our recruiters.

Next, they must encourage Dr McKendry to release his fact-finding report on this issue immediately and commit to acting on his recommendations at once.

The government must also act to relieve the tight restrictions on qualified, foreign-trained physicians, many of whom are keen to practise in this province right now.

The people in my part of Ontario need and deserve quality health care, whether they need it at 3 pm or at 3 am. The Minister of Health must acknowledge that, speak about it, and take decisive action to deal with this issue before this crisis becomes a frightening reality.

FIRST NATIONS

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I rise today to inform the members of this House of a wonderful success story in Simcoe North.

The Beausoleil First Nation is located on Christian Island in beautiful Georgian Bay. Two young women, both friends of the First Nation, 18-year-old Leslie-Ann Monague and her friend Michelle Jessen, recently swam the rough waters of the channel between Christian Island and the mainland at Cedar Point as a fundraising initiative. The purpose of the swim was to raise awareness of

and funding for the local share of a kidney dialysis unit at the Penetanguishene General Hospital.

Statistics have concluded that there is a very high incidence of diabetes among our First Nations people. In fact, Mr Larry Sandy, health director of the Beausoleil Health Centre, has said that up to 15% of the native population of Christian Island may have diabetes, a leading cause of kidney failure.

I am pleased to inform the members of this House that Leslie-Ann and Michelle's swim was a resounding success. The local media reported the event from accompanying boats in what was a very emotional and spiritual event.

To date, Leslie-Ann and Michelle have raised over \$16,000. The people of Simcoe North and the natives of Christian Island are extremely proud of these young ladies. Leslie-Ann and Jessica have made a commitment to their community and are an inspiration to the youth of our province.

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INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PROTECTION OF CHILDREN INVOLVED IN PROSTITUTION ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR LA PROTECTION DES ENFANTS QUI SE LIVRENT À LA PROSTITUTION

Mr Bartolucci moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 6, An Act to protect Children involved in Prostitution / Projet de loi 6, Loi visant à protéger les enfants qui se livrent à la prostitution.

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

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): The purpose of this bill is to protect children involved in prostitution. The bill gives police officers the power, with a warrant, to apprehend a child involved in prostitution and return the child to his or her family, or to place the child in a protective safe house. The police officer may also apprehend the child without a warrant where the child's life or safety is seriously or imminently endangered.

TAXPAYER PROTECTION AND BALANCED BUDGET ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR LA PROTECTION DES CONTRIBUABLES ET L'ÉQUILIBRE BUDGÉTAIRE

Mr Harris moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 7, An Act to protect taxpayers against tax increases, to establish a process requiring voter approval for proposed tax increases and to ensure that the Provincial Budget is a balanced budget / Projet de loi 7, Loi

protégeant les contribuables des augmentations d'impôt, établissant un processus d'approbation des projets d'augmentation d'impôt par les électeurs et garantissant l'équilibre du budget provincial.

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

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): The Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act, if passed, will provide permanent protection to Ontario taxpayers: protection from unfair and unwanted tax hikes, protection from reckless deficit spending.

On this side of the House we believe that government should provide real benefit to real people and keep the economy strong.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Harris: I understand the Liberals interjecting don't agree with balanced budgets and tax cuts and that's fair, that's their position and the people have heard their position.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. As I said yesterday during the debates, if I cannot hear the member, I will rise and I will stand for as long as it takes for order to come. If I cannot hear the members speaking, we will not be able to proceed. I say that regardless of how long it will take because I do need to be able to hear the members. If the members would please give the indulgence to the Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: In spite of this, through too much of our province's recent history we've witnessed governments that were addicted to taxing and spending. That taxing and spending dragged Ontario down.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: This isn't simply saying a few words about a bill. If the Premier has a ministerial statement, it should be treated as such.

The Speaker: The member will know that the Premier just barely got started before he was interrupted. I will allow him a short—as you know, it is supposed to be short. I believe it is a short statement and I will rule if it is not.

Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: This bill will correct those actions that killed jobs and hampered hope. The legislation I am introducing today will help to keep provincial budgets balanced. It proposes the beginning with the 2001-02 fiscal year. A deficit may only be run in extraordinary circumstances such as natural disaster or war. Under normal circumstances—

The Speaker: I did allow a bit of extra time but, as you know, it is supposed to be brief. If the Premier could wrap up very quickly, please.

Hon Mr Harris: Let me wrap up by summarizing this way. We on this side support this kind of legislation. We know the opposition doesn't, but I would hope they would at least permit debate on this bill and that it could be passed as soon as possible.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: What the Premier has just done is a total abuse of the rules of this Legislature.

The Speaker: Again I will say to the members that I will stand for as long as it takes until there is silence and I can hear the member. There will only be one person in this province that will be happy with that, and that is my mother, who is watching at home on TV. If need be, I will stand for as long as it takes.

Mr Bradley: Mr Speaker, it would be quite legitimate for the Premier in debate to make the points that he has. There is nothing wrong with that. This is a place that has partisan differences. But the purpose of introducing a bill without a ministerial statement is simply to explain the provisions of the bill. Instead, we get a political speech from the Premier who points at the opposition and says where the opposition is on a specific issue.

The Speaker: I thank the member for the point of order. He is aware that the statements are supposed to be short during the interruptions. I did lose a little track of time and I'm sure the government members in the future will realize the rules as well.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: This is an important point to make. It's the second day in a row now where we've had major, substantive initiatives from the government. They were pleased enough. They had the Premier stand and they all stood there and made a big deal, and then he made exactly the comments that should have come under standing order 35(a), which provides us with an opportunity to respond.

The word we've gotten from the government House leader's office is that there is no ministerial statement on this today, as there wasn't yesterday. Our point of order, and we share it with the official opposition, is not the length of time that it took but rather that they made the political speech during that part of the introduction of the bill and didn't do it during the part that is provided for in 35(a).

Speaker, at the beginning of this term, if this is the pattern that's to be set, then effectively they are violating the standing orders of this place. Therefore, we ask you to rule that that was a political speech and inappropriate, and we ought to hear that during a ministerial statement.

Hon Mr Harris: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I did plan to give a description of the bill and I apologize if, in responding to the inappropriate interjections of opposition to the bill, I got into that. I merely point out to the Legislature that I was only responding to those interjections that came primarily from the Liberal benches. I should have ignored it and just got on with the description of the bill, and I'll bear that in mind, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you very much. I will caution the government. As they know, there are the ministerial statements and, as I mentioned earlier, there will be some leeway in the amount of time. I think the government knows the rules as well as everybody else and I would caution the government in the future on that matter.

Mr Christopherson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Given the fact that it would appear from the ruling you've made that you agree with the points we've made, in order to put things right, I would ask you to allow us at least equal time that the Premier took, inappropriately, as you have ruled, to respond to that political comment.

The Speaker: On that point of order, to the member, I have cautioned the government in the future on this matter but I will not be allowing a response today.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In the interest of fairness, I would ask for unanimous consent that the official opposition have approximately one minute to respond because, as was pointed out, as you have ruled, the rules were not followed here. What was supposed to be a brief description of the contents of the bill turned into a ministerial statement. So I'm asking for unanimous consent, in the interest of fairness, that we be allowed to respond to what was in fact a ministerial statement.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I do not hear unanimous consent.

Again I say to the members, during the introduction of bills the explanation should be short, and I would caution the government in the future.

Mr Duncan: Mr Speaker, I would ask for unanimous consent at this time to pay tribute to the late Ross Hall and the late Frank Faubert.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

ROSS HALL

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): On behalf of my colleagues, I want to pay tribute to a very good friend and former colleague of mine, the former mayor of Grimsby, Ross Hall, who was laid to rest a few days ago.

I guess there are really only three of us left, Norm, Jim Bradley and I, who would remember Ross, but I think it is fair to say that by any objective standard Ross Hall was as good a person who has ever served in this place, certainly in my 24 years.

To begin with I was thinking, I say to the government House leader, that Ross wouldn't want much done today because he'd be embarrassed that a great deal of time and effort was spent to pay tribute to him. The minister at the memorial service at Trinity United Church last Saturday in Grimsby made the point that one of Ross's many virtues was his humility.

He was a man of very fine character, a man who had served not only as the MLA for Lincoln from 1975 to 1981, after which he served two terms as mayor of Grimsby, but perhaps even more importantly—and I think in Ross's mind it would have been a more important contribution—he served on the hospital board, the school board, the Brock University board. He ran a very successful business in the Niagara Peninsula for many years.

He was very much a man of his community, and that that was so was very clearly evident Saturday morning when it was a standing-room-only crowd at Trinity United Church in Grimsby to pay tribute to a very fine citizen.

One of the things that Ross was always concerned about, particularly when it dealt with bigger government, was the arbitrary and intrusive instinct of big government. I don't think it's any secret to say that one of the main reasons that Ross Hall ran for this place in 1975 was his concern about what was happening at the Niagara Escarpment Commission. Not that he did not have a good environmental conscience, but he was very concerned about how intrusive the commission appeared to be in the daily lives of people down in his part of Ontario.

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He was also concerned about the arbitrary nature of government. I can remember one particular occasion in this chamber about 20 years ago about the actions of a farm marketing board that was being extremely high-handed as it went about what it imagined to be good works. Nothing upset Ross Hall more than the intrusive and arbitrary nature of big government.

That he was a generous soul is very evident from his contributions to which I made reference earlier. Ross was also one of those people who was blessed in life with a keen intelligence, a great family and very considerable business success, but he was one of those people who believed that to whom much was given much was expected. I had a very pleasant visit with him about a month ago and I can tell you he was concerned about the tenor of current politics. He felt that we had an obligation, all of us, particularly people who had been successful, to reach out to those in the community who had been less successful.

I don't think Ross would want me to say this, but in a sense he was a true Methodist, because by good works he wanted to be known. As he was laid to rest a few days ago, it is by his good works, not just here but across the Niagara Peninsula, that he will be remembered.

To his wife, Alison, to his children, Terry, Trish and Barbara, we say our thank you for giving a husband and father to us for the six years he was here and we want you to know that his legacy here and elsewhere will be long and fondly remembered.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I am proud to rise on behalf of our caucus and extend our condolences to the Hall family for their loss. I did not serve with nor know Ross Hall, but certainly in reviewing his public life as well as his involvement in his community, it comes out very clearly and very strongly that he cared a lot about community and that he was a natural leader.

When I look at the years that he was president of Hall-Ogilvie Ltd, the fact that he's a past president of the Grimsby Lions Club, a past president of the Grimsby Businessmen's Association, he was a leader at the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital, a leader at the Grimsby and district high school board and he was chair of his caucus,

all of those things indicate that this is someone who cared and knew his community and also had natural leadership ability. Given, quite frankly that the 1970s weren't necessarily the best of times legislatively for the Liberal Party, he moved back to his community, politically speaking, and became the leader there: He became the mayor of Grimsby.

All of this, in summary, points to an individual who has a proud record in this place, back in his own community, a lifelong commitment to hometown and also a clear willingness to share the natural leadership abilities that Mr Hall clearly had.

Again, our deepest sympathies go to the family of former MPP Ross Hall.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): I want to say at this time that it was really a pleasure as a member of the Legislature and particularly in a different party to have known and to have worked with Ross Hall.

Ross and I spent the 1977-81 period of time here, which was a minority Parliament. The difference, of course, between a majority and a minority is that the opposition parties have to accept some responsibility for the outcome of legislation, because without their votes, it doesn't occur.

In some ways it was easier during a minority Parliament period to get to know members of the opposition, because you had to work, you had to negotiate, you had to actually come to a common conclusion in order to reach a successful solution.

One of the things I can say on behalf of my experience at that time as a parliamentary assistant I think to the Attorney General, as I was in 1978, is that when we went into a committee and when we wanted to deal with a problem and change the law here in the province of Ontario, there was no better person to deal with in terms of trying to reach a good conclusion for the people of Ontario, because Ross was less partisan perhaps than he was a man who wanted to really improve the laws, the rules and the lot of any Ontarian he represented, and all of Ontario—an extremely fair man, an extremely gentle and kind man, although he did speak his mind and let people know exactly where he stood.

I can remember some of the conversations even after he left this place in 1981. He would come back to several functions that we would have, and he was still concerned and still talked in very friendly terms.

When we're talking about either Ross Hall or Frank Faubert, I consider both of these men to be my friends as well as being in the opposition benches. While people who watch this place and watch us spar from day to day find that hard to understand, both of these gentlemen, and particularly Ross because I knew him during that minority Parliament period, I considered a real genuine friend and a genuine person when he spoke about an issue. I didn't believe he was ever acting or holding himself out in a position that he didn't firmly believe in.

I'm sorry to lose a friend and I want to express our condolences to you, his family, his wife and his children.

We've lost a great citizen in Ontario and a great contributor, not only to this place but to his beloved community.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I thank the member for those kind words.

FRANK FAUBERT

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I appreciate the opportunity to speak on behalf of my leader, Dalton McGuinty, and my colleagues in caucus.

I knew Frank Faubert very well for 35 years. He was a great friend. He was here in the Legislature for three years, from 1987 to 1990. He loved this place, the Legislature. He loved the building; he loved to be in this Legislature. He loved the debate. He had a real sense of history about him and I think we could all learn something from Frank on that count.

He really was one of the parents of the Rouge park. There are a lot of people who like to take credit for the Rouge park, but Frank actually was one of those who should take credit. He worked tirelessly for the Rouge park and he should be very proud of that.

He also had a bit of an independent streak. In those years we were attempting to get the Olympic bid for Toronto. Frank had a different view. He felt it should go to Athens. He actually had studied it. He felt there should be a permanent site in Greece for the Olympics and he couldn't be pushed off that position. He stood up for his principles on it, and he had not a bad idea.

But he was best known as Mr Scarborough, as Marilyn Mushinski and others would realize. He loved Scarborough. He was born there; he grew up there. He lived and breathed Scarborough.

He was elected in 1996 to council. I was actually his campaign manager. That was my first campaign job. Campaign headquarters, like a lot of them, was in the basement of somebody's house. We had the poll numbers up. I thought we were going to do really well, but that first poll came in and we had lost it four to two. It was an apartment building that had just been built. Frank's spirit was: "Gerry, don't worry. Everything's going to be fine." I had that brave face on that every manager does, but feeling, "Boy, oh boy, things aren't going well." He went on to be on the board of control and mayor.

We can learn a lot from Frank. One of the first things Frank did was, he really believed in communities and after school hours the parks and recreation department would come in and take over the schools in Scarborough and they would be the community centres. That was really Frank driving that.

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Scarborough went through an enormous change. It became truly one of the great multicultural, multi-religious communities in Canada, maybe in the world, and Frank was at the forefront of that. There are now gurdwaras, there are Hindu temples, there are Muslim mosques throughout Scarborough, and Frank made sure that happened.

He also was one of the first people who really got involved heavily in race relations. I always had a feeling from Frank—some of us in politics would kind of weigh how many votes at election time are in this thing. Frank had an ability to weigh what was the truth in this matter. He would take stands that weren't necessarily always politically popular but in Frank's mind were always right.

His last big fight was a fight to save Scarborough, and he felt very deeply about that during amalgamation.

I call him a happy warrior with a sense of optimism, because periodically this business can get us down a little bit. I never saw Frank down. He always had this sometimes misplaced but always enormous sense of optimism that things were going to work out.

He was truly blessed to have a wife, Marilyn, who I have known, as I say, for 35 years, who was a terrific partner and help to him, and a wonderful family of five children. He was one of those people who truly are blessed, and the sympathies of all of the Legislature go out to Marilyn and the family.

He also was an avid golfer and golf fan. In fact, that's where I first met Frank. It was in 1954 and I was 14 years old, so you know how old I am now. I came down from London, Ontario, to Scarborough to caddy in the Canadian Open. The day before the Open started there was an exhibition match between Betsy Rawls, one of the world's great female golfers, and I caddied for her, and Peter Thomson, who you will still hear is a famous golfer, played against Sam Snead and the greatest woman athlete ever, Babe Zaharias. I told Frank that story later on, that that was when I first came to Scarborough and whatnot. Frank said, "You won't believe it, but I was Babe Zaharias's caddy that day." So I've known Frank well for 35 years but much longer as a friend.

Finally, the Cancer Society is considering holding a golf tournament in Frank's name, which I think is a fitting tribute to a terrific person. It would be a great tribute to someone who I miss dearly, Mr Scarborough, Frank Faubert.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): On behalf of our caucus, I too would like to say a few words about Mr Faubert.

I was elected at the same time as Frank Faubert. As I remember it, there were about 95 Liberals in the Legislature after the 1987 election—he, as a backbench Liberal, elected for the first time, and I was a first-time New Democrat. We had the incredible joy of serving together on committees investigating Sunday shopping and a number of other issues that hung around and hung around. I remember Frank was one of those people who, because of his sense of community, although he wouldn't do it openly, would many times after the committee hearings suggest that the idea of Sunday shopping was not the best idea that his government had brought forward and that he would have a particular difficulty with it in terms of explaining it to some of the communities in his Scarborough.

I remember Frank as a very funny man, someone who loved to laugh, someone who came here and genuinely

every day decided that no matter what the debate, how partisan it was, how difficult it might be, he was going to have a good time and he was going to develop some friendships on all sides of the House.

He was an incredibly energetic person, someone who probably, if there had not been 95 members of the Liberal caucus, would have very quickly moved into a cabinet position. He knew that just because of the historical reality and the lay of the land he was not going to be offered a cabinet position, so he worked very, very hard on a number of fronts.

After he was no longer an MPP, when I was Minister of Natural Resources, it is indeed true that Frank Faubert was one of those people who literally spent at least some time every day fighting for, cajoling, lobbying on behalf of the Rouge River park. His willingness to work on that issue crossed all party lines. It crossed through municipal factions and municipal groups, it crossed through party lines here and it crossed through party lines in Ottawa in ensuring that the land could be assembled and that this park could become a reality. It was something he was absolutely tireless on. He regarded it, I think, as one of the things he wanted to accomplish in his public life so that when his public life was over he could look back and say: "That is something that I am very proud of. That is something that I played a part in achieving."

After he was no longer a member, as you know, he went on to become a member of Scarborough council and then to assume even more responsibility in Scarborough, and it's true that he was quite an opponent of the megacity. Even there his opposition crossed party lines. On a number of occasions I met with him to talk about strategy and tactics, about what needed to be done, about the fact that it is not a good idea to try to govern one million people plus with one government. He was equally energetic and passionate about that. At the same time as he was energetic and passionate about that, his feeling was not one of partisanship. His feeling was one that was genuinely grounded in concern for the community.

Obviously Scarborough, Toronto and this province of Ontario have lost a really great individual, someone about whom many of us who sat in this House with him were very proud and pleased to be able to say, "He was our friend." He was somebody we all respected.

We wish to add our condolences to the family and to all of those people who were very close to him in a personal way. We will miss him. The city of Scarborough will miss him. The city of Toronto will miss him. Ontario will miss him.

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): As I mentioned in my remarks on the throne speech yesterday, I had a very long and very interesting working relationship with the late Frank Faubert. I succeeded him as ward 5 councillor—actually, it was alderman in those days, way back in 1982—and I guess the one thing we had in common at that time was that we were both, I guess, somewhat vertically challenged. The difference between Frank and myself is that Frank was lion-hearted.

I served for a number of years with Frank on Scarborough city council, until 1987, when Frank was elected to this place to serve as the member for my old riding of Scarborough-Ellesmere. He served that from 1987 to 1990.

He came back to serve as councillor for ward 8 after 1990, and we both went on to run as mayor in 1994. As we all know, Frank won, so I guess in some backward way you could say that he was partially responsible for my entry into provincial politics.

There's no question that Frank Faubert was a gifted politician. He had a very strong and passionate voice for his community in Scarborough and, as has been referred to already, he had a great sense of humour. He never let his physical size get him down. In fact, he was not just a great golf player; he was a pretty good tennis player too, Gerry.

But most importantly, Frank Faubert was a wonderful family man. His love for his wife, Marilyn, and his children and grandchildren was legendary in Scarborough.

On behalf of my constituents—and I'm pleased to say that I am joined today by the Hon Pauline Browes and David Hutcheon, who served on Metro council with Frank—I'd like to once again extend my deepest sympathies to Marilyn, his wife, and to his family. I know that we will all miss Frank.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I want to thank all the members for their kind remarks, and I will see that copies of Hansard are sent to the families.

1420

ORAL QUESTIONS

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. I have a serious matter that I want to bring to your attention. It involves another of your cabinet ministers. I've provided you with a letter. Can you explain why your environment minister has written a letter to the chair of Durham about a matter before the Ontario Municipal Board in which your minister advocates on behalf of a developer?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): No, I can't, but I could refer it to the minister.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I'd be happy to answer that very serious and erroneous allegation by the honourable Leader of the Opposition. At no time did I write a letter to anyone advocating on behalf of a developer.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, to jog your memory, I have a copy of a letter here. It was received by the region of Durham on August 26, 1999. At the time, there was a hearing before the Ontario Municipal Board. One of the parties to that hearing was Jay-M Holdings. You were copied a letter from a lawyer for Jay-M Holdings. You

then wrote to the chair, another party to the OMB hearing. You provided new information and you said, "I trust you will carefully consider this new information," and you asked that you be kept "in the loop."

We have a quasi-judicial hearing underway. You decide as Minister of the Environment, the man charged with protecting our natural environment, to weigh into this matter and you advocate on behalf of a developer.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Question.

Mr McGuinty: My question to you is, since your Premier is not prepared to accept responsibility for this, do you think it is appropriate for you to weigh into this matter as Minister of the Environment and advocate on behalf of a developer when there's a hearing before the OMB?

Hon Mr Clement: The honourable Leader of the Opposition has woven through his text unsubstantiated allegations and conclusions which are not supported by the facts. The letter to which he refers was a letter from one politician to another politician suggesting that he obey the law.

I make no excuse for the fact that I, as a politician, was copied on a letter by a party who wished to ensure that I knew all of the facts. I know and I can state for the record that my letter in no way suggests it is a decision other than the decision of the regional chair. I, as an elected representative of this Legislature, wanted to ensure that in all circumstances the letter and the spirit of the law was obeyed. My letter was simply suggesting to Roger Anderson that he obey the law, and I make no excuses about that.

Mr McGuinty: I know the minister would like us to believe that it was simply a matter of a piece of correspondence sent by one politician to another. It was sent by a minister of the crown. It was a matter before the Ontario Municipal Board. You had received a letter from a lawyer acting for the developer. You were copied that letter. You then sent a letter to the chair of Durham board in support of the lawyer's letter. That is interference. That is unacceptable. As a minister of the crown, you are not allowed to interfere; you're not allowed to weigh into matters before the Ontario Municipal Board.

Stand up, Minister, and tell us how this is entirely appropriate and in keeping with the traditions and precedents of this House. Tell us why this is entirely acceptable.

Hon Mr Clement: Again the honourable member makes an allegation which is not substantiated by the letter. I'm happy to share the letter with the entire Legislature because the letter simply says: "Here is the law. Let me know how you are going to act within the law and get back to me." If that's the letter they are suggesting is somehow untoward, I defy them to tell me how it is untoward, because it is not. To make that serious allegation in this chamber on the basis of a single letter that has nothing in it other than saying "Obey the law," I think we have seen the depths to which the opposition is willing to go.

The Speaker: Second question; the leader of the official opposition.

Mr McGuinty: My question is to the Premier. Premier, you now have been acquainted to a limited extent with this issue. Do you think it is appropriate for your minister, in these circumstances, to have weighed into this matter? He tells us that the only reason he sent the letter was to ensure they were upholding the law. Well, you know what? There happens to be a legal maxim that says you are deemed to know the law. There is no reason whatsoever for this minister to have written this letter to the chair of the Durham board.

Premier, do you feel that your minister acted in an appropriate manner?

Hon Mr Harris: To the best of my knowledge, I feel he has. But if you feel he hasn't, refer it to the conflict commissioner. We'll all find out.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, you cannot wash your hands of this matter so quickly and so simply. This is all about your standards. To make it perfectly clear, we're talking here about three serious conflicts: (1) Your minister is clearly advocating on behalf of a developer about a matter before the OMB; (2) your environment minister, through this letter, is going out of his way to encourage a developer to use a loophole in the Environmental Protection Act to build a development in one of Ontario's most environmental sensitive regions; and (3) you now have given this same minister the responsibility for handling the municipal affairs portfolio.

Premier, in all the circumstances here your responsibility is not to send this matter away in the hope that it will disappear. Your responsibility is to ask for this minister's resignation. Will you do that?

Hon Mr Harris: No.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, you refused to demand the resignation of Steven Gilchrist. You left him swinging in the wind for four weeks. He had to cut himself down. Now we've got another minister, a minister in your cabinet, the minister for the environment. We've got a hearing before the Ontario Municipal Board. One of the parties to that hearing writes to this minister. He then takes it upon himself to write to another party, the chair of the Durham board, telling him that he had better carefully consider this new information.

If that's not weighing in, if that's not inappropriate, then I don't know what is. I think in all of the circumstances you now have to take responsibility for this and ask for the resignation of your minister.

Hon Mr Harris: Let me first of all say that I agree with the member: You don't know what is appropriate and what is inappropriate and you've demonstrated that consistently since your election to this Legislature.

Secondly, I have had a quick look at the letter. It seems to be a referral of information to the chairman of the region. But you've had opportunities to look at it. You've had lawyers look at it. If you think something is inappropriate, say so. Refer it to the conflict commissioner and get a ruling.

The Speaker: Question, leader of the third party.

1430

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is also for the Premier. I want to come back to the point I raised with him yesterday.

Premier, we accept that your government is biased in favour of development. We've watched your government. We've watched some of the legislation you brought to the House. We accept that the Minister of Municipal Affairs is very much interested in development: real estate development, highway development, property development. The problem here is that you've done the right thing in forcing your Minister of Municipal Affairs to step aside because he is under police investigation. Belatedly, the right thing was done. But you've now placed the Minister of the Environment in a conflict because the job of the Ministry of the Environment is to ensure that when development applications come forward from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs—and that's how your government has organized it—the job of the Minister of the Environment is to ensure that ecologically sensitive areas are protected. You've put your Minister of the Environment in a very—

The Speaker: Order. Premier?

Hon Mr Harris: Unlike the leader of the third party, there is nothing wrong with being pro-development and pro-environment at the same time. That is indeed the role of the government. I believe that was the role of Ruth Grier as a cabinet minister when you made her responsible for the GTA, where all the growth is taking place, and the environment at the same time. I think she was able at that time to fulfill the responsibility to balance her role as the one minister responsible for growth in the GTA at the same time as the minister responsible for the environment. We accepted that. We accept that this minister is equal to, if not better than, Ruth Grier.

Mr Hampton: Premier, trying to compare apples and oranges is not going to do it for you. The reality is that when Ruth Grier was Minister of the Environment, the agenda was about protecting the Oak Ridges moraine. The agenda was about ensuring that you established a sewage system that worked throughout the greater Toronto area and provided some coordination so we could protect the environment.

It's very clear from the first four years of your government that that's not the agenda. The agenda is about moving forward on developments and side-stepping the environment.

As we saw yesterday when I introduced the letter and pointed out how angry the council is in Uxbridge, you have put your Minister of the Environment in a conflict of interest. On the one hand he is supposed to be protecting sensitive areas, he's supposed to be looking out for ecologically important areas when development proposals come from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, and we see already that he's not doing that. He's behaving like a pro-development minister. What are you going to do about that conflict of interest, especially about protecting our environment?

Hon Mr Harris: Let me give you another example where a gentleman by the name of Bud Wildman was the Minister of Energy, responsible for hydro, responsible for coal-burning energy plants, responsible for nuclear plants, and you felt it was appropriate that he should hold the portfolio as the Minister of Environment at the same time. You see, you have one standard for yourselves and then another standard that you seem to allege—most inappropriately, I might add—for others.

I think it is entirely appropriate that we have sustainable development. I think it's entirely appropriate that we have growth in an environmentally friendly way. Who better than the Minister of the Environment to be able to do both?

Mr Hampton: Once again, apples and oranges won't get you anywhere, because the agenda those days in terms of energy was a moratorium on more nuclear plants. It was a moratorium on more coal-fired plants. It was to promote energy efficiency and conservation.

You said it yourself, Premier: Your government is a very pro-development government. Your government is all about moving aside, side-stepping ecological issues, side-stepping in this case the environmental assessment.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock. I say to the government members that if in fact I cannot hear the question, I will be stopping the clock and we will take as long as it takes to settle the House down. The time will not continue to click off if it's the government benches that are making the disturbances.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I say again, if the government benches are disruptive, I will call order and I will stand until there's quiet so that I and all members can hear the answer.

Leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: I get the impression that your members don't like this line of questioning, Premier, but I have to tell you, as long as you keep putting your government in these kinds of conflicts of interest, this line of questioning will continue.

The germane part of Mr Clements's letter is where he suggests to the municipal council, "Just change your environmental assessment."

The question is this: Do you understand the role of the Minister of the Environment or is the Minister of the Environment in your government simply going to become the minister of development, and the environment be damned? Do you understand the conflict you've created there and what are you going to do about it?

Hon Mr Harris: I think the member has identified that there can be a conflict between development and the environment, and it is the job of the government to balance that.

I don't know whether Ruth Grier was the apple or the orange or whether Bud Wildman was the apple or the orange, but I heard the member very clearly say, and it is on the record, "That was OK because we agreed with the policies of the government." So what you have acknow-

ledged today is, there is no conflict in the minister serving both portfolios unless you happen to disagree with the philosophy of the government or the philosophy of the day. You cannot have it both ways.

There is no conflict. It is the role of the government to balance growth in an environmentally sensitive way, and nobody has done it better than this government in the last 15 years.

ABORTION

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): My question is to the minister responsible for women's issues. This weekend thousands of darling little children are going to go around door to door dressed as goblins and ghosts and bunnies and bumblebees and it will be a happy time. Some of them, as they're calling out, "Trick or treat," will be asking for candy; some will be asking for coins for a donation box.

In Toronto, students of the Toronto Catholic school board who are carrying donation boxes will be asking for donations for one of three charities that the board has approved. One of those charities is Aid to Women. It is an anti-abortion group that has been linked with harassment activities of women who are seeking legal medical access to services such as reproductive counselling and abortion. I have sent you over a copy of the letter that I sent to the Toronto board, respectfully asking them to reconsider this decision.

Halloween is not a time for ideological debates; it's a time for kids. Would you join with me in asking them to reconsider that decision?

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): This is the first question on women I've had in this House and I would like to say how proud I am to be representing women in this caucus and coordinating women's issues. Women's issues branch out over nine ministries within this government, and I know that my colleagues, female and male, are all very supportive of this.

This issue of Aid to Women and the abortion issue are issues that people feel very strongly on and they are certainly issues that we all have to be concerned about. I'd like to say, though, that I am committed to making sure that women have the proper health care that they need in this province and also have the justice that they require.

The one thing I do know, as the mother of two small children, is that Halloween is a time for kids, and I certainly am committed to kids going out there and having a great time on Halloween. It's one of the most important days of the year in their lives.

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Ms Lankin: Minister, in order to stand up for women you have to stand up for their right of access to legal medical services, all of them, including the right of access to abortion services.

I asked you very clearly if you would join your voice to mine. I'm not asking your government to give a directive to the board. I'm not asking the Minister of Education to give a directive to the board. I'm asking the minister responsible for women's issues to stand up and join with me, make her voice heard on behalf of women and on behalf of Ontarians who believe in women's access to a legal medical service like abortion, and say that it is wrong for the board to have decided to have kids involved in raising money for a group with a misleading name like Aid to Women. It's not a women's shelter. It is an activist anti-abortion group that has been linked in the Attorney General's injunction to activities outside of the clinics, stopping women getting access to that legal service.

A simple question: Please just say, do you agree that Halloween is not the time for this and you'll join your voice with mine, that you'll send a letter to the board requesting them to reverse this decision?

Hon Mrs Johns: Let me say that the government is committed to women receiving medical services that they need in this province. I think the Minister of Health does an incredible job to make sure that happens.

The open letter that the member opposite has prepared is written to the Toronto Catholic District School Board to ensure that they reconsider this issue. Let me say that I know the trustees of the Toronto Catholic District School Board will look at the issue, they will consider the importance of the issue, and I'm sure they did the first time they looked at it.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Premier. You now have a copy of the same letter I referred to in my earlier questions. You will notice that it's on Minister of the Environment letterhead. You will know that it is signed by Tony Clement, minister.

The letter specifically makes reference to a letter received by the minister from the representative of a developer. It treats an issue that at that time was before the Ontario Municipal Board.

If there is one thing that ought to have been drilled into every head of every rookie minister in your cabinet it is that they are not allowed to interfere in any quasi-judicial matter. That is a simple precept of government.

Tell me why again, Premier, that is entirely acceptable behaviour according to your standards.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): The letter in question is in no way directed to any quasi-judicial body. If you believe, though, that the letter places the minister in a conflict, refer it to the conflict commissioner. That's your right to do.

Mr McGuinty: We've heard from the Premier that they don't constitute the government over there. It's now quite apparent that the Premier doesn't want to act as Premier either, because if he wanted to act as Premier, he

would take leadership on these matters, not leave his ministers swinging in the wind, and do the right thing.

You've got a letter here from a minister in your cabinet who has weighed in on a matter that is before the Ontario Municipal Board. He makes a representation on behalf of a developer. To make matters worse, this guy is the Minister of the Environment.

Tell us why, Premier, this guy shouldn't resign, because you know very much in your heart of hearts that this is entirely unacceptable, this is entirely inappropriate. If you were standing in my position today, you'd be swinging off the chandeliers.

Do the right thing. Ask this guy for his resignation. Tell him he's out.

Hon Mr Harris: I think I've answered the question. The supplementary that dealt with what I would do if I were in the member's position: I would resign.

DRIVER EXAMINATIONS

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. I have a question regarding the graduated licensing system and the backlog of road test appointments.

Novice drivers in my riding of Peterborough are experiencing significant waiting times before they can take their road tests. As you can appreciate, novice drivers want to be able to take their road tests in a reasonable amount of time. When can we expect the improvements you recently announced to take effect?

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): The answer is, you will immediately see improvement. We've taken action, real action, to end the backlog. We are in the process of doubling the number of road test examiners in the province. Newspaper advertisements have already appeared, and we will extend temporary driver's licences from 90 days to one year if they are caught in the backlog.

There will be an additional 325,000 tests per year when fully implemented. The current backlog is clearly unacceptable. We have taken action. We want to strengthen the actions of graduated licensing.

Mr Stewart: Thank you, Minister, for your response. As you are aware, novice drivers in urban areas have to travel to rural centres to take their road test. This often leads to additional waiting times because the novice drivers from the rural areas are competing for appointment times with the ones from the urban areas.

When will we see an immediate improvement in the availability of road test appointments, and will the wait for road test appointments in rural areas improve?

Hon Mr Turnbull: You will see immediate improvements as a result of the GTA actions. Wait times will ease. We're implementing a 1-800 number which will allow anyone in the province to phone up to see where the nearest and best—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I couldn't hear the end of the answer. Minister?

Hon Mr Turnbull: I want to point out to the honourable members that as a result of graduated licensing, collisions are down among novice drivers by 31% and fatality and injury rates are down 24%. This is a good system. I will not compromise the speed of solving the solution with safety. Safety is the prime question. We're the fourth-safest administration in North America for highways. We want to make it even better.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I have a question for the Minister of Education. I want to ask you today to respond to the deprivation of special education students around the province of their education.

In Hamilton alone, 275 children are not funded at all this year. There are another 275 who are only being funded because the board is taking money from some place else and depriving other students. Twenty-three kids, you will know, had to stay home this year for almost two months because of your negligence.

Here today are some of the kids affected: Timothy, Hannah and Josh. They're here today because you made them have to come here to make their case. Their education has been taken away by your formula. Timothy has a full visual impairment. He only has half-time assistance at school. That assistant cannot translate the Braille fast enough for him to get an education.

Minister, you promised Timothy and these other students an education. When are you going to start delivering on it?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): I think we all acknowledge and recognize that for many students special education support can make a very big difference for those young people in terms of getting the education they deserve. That's why we changed the way that funding goes to boards to support those programs. We put in more money to the boards so they would have even more money to deal with this. We protected it so the boards would not spend less. We said that the boards had the flexibility to construct those programs and spend more if they wish. The Hamilton-Wentworth board has indeed spent more.

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I should also like to say that this board, as do all of the boards, has choices to make. They have more money even though there are fewer students. Those trustees are working with that board. They are making the decisions—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order, member for Sudbury.

Hon Mrs Ecker: The trustees of this board are elected to make decisions about how much more they want to put into this program, what they pay their staff, what they pay their teachers, how they organize the financial resources. That's why they are elected by their community to make those decisions.

Mr Kennedy: Before coming to the House I spoke with one of these kids, Josh. He told me to be careful about politicians who listen but don't hear. That's what we've just seen.

The Hamilton-Wentworth board is running a deficit of \$2.5 million. Minister, the Ontario public supervisory officials have told you, using your figures, that boards are already spending \$100 million. It's you and your government that have the twisted priorities. It's your government that's prepared to let Josh still be out of school right now, that is prepared to let Joyce, who is here with her daughter, Hannah, have to go to school half-time to make sure her daughter gets what should be, even in your province, an entitlement to basic education.

Even your government-appointed Education Improvement Commission said, "There are problems with special education." You need to address this now, today. I ask you not to turn these children away, not to make, as the chair of the Hamilton board says, a situation where these children are at risk, and to respond by pledging full funding for special education students in this province right now.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I would like to point out to the honourable member that we do have full funding for special education students in this province.

Interjections.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I know they don't want to hear the answer here.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order, member for Windsor West. Minister of Education?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I share the concerns of my colleagues from Stoney Creek and Wentworth-Burlington, who've met with these parents because none of us—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I understand there are going to be occasions when all members believe passionately. But we cannot continue when I cannot hear the question and when the person answering the question cannot hear themselves think. I say to all the members that during these periods of time I will simply stand for as long as it takes until we have order in this House.

Yesterday, as you know, we got about 14 questions on. Today, we will not be getting as many questions. I will stand here for as long as it takes for us to maintain order in this House because I must be able to hear the answer.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I share with my colleagues from Stoney Creek and Wentworth-Burlington the concern that these young people are at home when they should be in school. But I would also like to point out that the boards asked for more money; they got it. They got more money last year; they got more money this year for special needs. They asked for money that was flexible; they got that too, in the SEPPA grant. They asked for money that went up as the needs and the number of students went up; they got that too.

The boards have a responsibility here. If this board is unable to allocate those funds, my ministry staff would

be very prepared to sit down with them and help them allocate them appropriately.

RAVE PARTIES

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. In recent months, there's been a great deal of media interest and community concern about youth activities at so-called rave parties. In Toronto alone, there have been at least three deaths related to drug and alcohol use and violence at these unlicensed underground parties. Many of these parties are being held in communities like my own in Scarborough. What action is the government taking to address the problems at rave parties?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): I appreciate the question from the member from Scarborough Centre. About two weeks ago, I met with Superintendent Ron Taverner of the Toronto police, who was interested in the commitment we made as a party during the election campaign, which was reaffirmed in the throne speech, to try and assist police and municipalities in dealing with licensed premises in this province that are habitual sources of illicit drugs and other crimes being committed through these premises.

Superintendent Taverner was suggesting that his force could work with the provincial government and municipal authorities to try and have an impact on the rave parties. It's a fact that some of these events are held in licensed premises even though the tenant, for example, may not be licensed as such. I have asked the Alcohol and Gaming Commission to take a look at this to see if we can assist in any way, shape or form. I will be talking to my other cabinet colleagues with respect to a co-ordinated effort.

Ms Mushinski: Thank you, Minister, for that important response.

It's important for parents in my community to know that the safety of their children is important to this government. As you mentioned, you were working with other ministries and municipal organization to address these illegal rave parties. What tools can governments bring to bear on this problem?

Hon Mr Runciman: As the member indicated, this is a very serious problem. Superintendent Taverner is very much concerned. Organized crime is involved, proliferation of so-called designer drugs. We have 13- and 14-year-old children attending these. Parents are unaware of the dangers that their children are exposed to by attending these kinds of parties. I believe that we can assist through a variety of provincial ministries, working with health authorities, with fire officials, with a variety of municipal departments.

Laughter.

Hon Mr Runciman: The Liberal Party is laughing about this. I think this is a clear indication of their concern about the safety of young children in this province, a very clear indication—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Is the Minister finished?

Hon Mr Runciman: I will say in wrapping up that the drugs are not only illegal, they're linked to other crimes in our communities, they're destroying people's lives and this government is going to work hard to eradicate them throughout this province.

PROTECTION OF JOBS

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): My question is to the Premier. There are hundreds of workers and their families down in Thorold, workers who work at the Gallaher Thorold paper mill, who are counting on you to make sure that their jobs aren't liquidated. They were pleased when you called the receiver and when you called the Toronto-Dominion Bank, the primary creditor, to make sure the mill continues to operate.

Here today in the gallery, we have Cec Makowski—he's the vice president, Ontario region, of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada—along with Brian Dobbie, vice president of Local 290. But back in the plant those workers are now in their second week of occupation of that plant, desperately trying to hold on to sorely needed jobs, not just for them and their families, but for the community and all of Niagara region.

Premier, will you please today pledge to commit all of your efforts and all of the resources of this government into finding a deal that will allow this plant to continue to run and keep those good jobs in Thorold and in Niagara?

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Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I appreciate the recognition of the efforts from my office and the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board and the minister personally and the staff have taken to ensure that we can find a buyer for this plant that is intent on operating and saving jobs, not breaking the assets up. That is indeed our goal and I'm delighted to pledge to the union representatives here and to the workers and to you that we'll do everything we can to assist, obviously within the parameters of how this government operates. I am confident and very hopeful that we can conclude a deal that will save those jobs.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Premier, I am glad to hear you are confident. I want some more specificity from you, however. As you know, the pulp and paper industry is a cyclical industry. A mill can be not doing well one year and be very prosperous the next. It's also an industry in transition, as more and more recycled fibre is being used.

You also know that there is a model for repositioning jobs in the pulp and paper industry. It was the model that was used at Provincial Papers in Thunder Bay, where 500 jobs were repositioned, and those are sustainable jobs; 300 jobs at St Marys Paper in Sault Ste Marie, and that's a mill that's doing very well; 800 jobs at Spruce Falls in Kapuskasing. What happened there is that the govern-

ment I was a part of brought the banks and the financial institutions, the workers, the union and the community together to put together a repositioning plan.

Premier, is your government willing to go to Thorold and sit down and help the parties come together and reposition that mill, reposition and sustain those jobs?

Hon Mr Harris: I appreciate the interest of the leader as well. I am not sure we want to copy all the examples of the NDP, which ran up record deficits and record unemployment and drove this province into the ground, record numbers of people dependent upon welfare. I am not sure those are classic examples for any government to follow any time hopefully in the next millennium, the mistakes they made for the five years of this millennium.

I will say this: David Lindsay of the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board and officials from the ministry will be meeting, in fact tomorrow, with representatives, I know, of the receiver and, I'm not sure, of the company. We have pledged to do everything we can to save those jobs.

SAFETY FOR SENIORS

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): My question is to the minister responsible for seniors issues. In recent days and weeks we have seen numerous articles about the deplorable conditions in some retirement homes in Ontario. Yesterday, in her response to the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan, the minister said that safety for seniors is a number one priority for this government. I was surprised by this statement because as I reviewed the throne speech, which speaks to the direction and priorities of the government for the next session, the word "seniors" was not even mentioned.

The minister also indicated that the government has worked with municipalities to help them enforce bylaws for residential homes within their communities. Of the 586 municipalities in the province of Ontario, only three have bylaws for retirement homes.

We know that squeegee kids are a priority for this government and we know the action your government intends to take to deal with them.

If ensuring the safety of seniors is a priority for your government, will the minister act immediately to investigate and reverse the deplorable conditions that exist in some retirement homes in Ontario?

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): I'm actually very surprised by the question because I thought I was very clear on all the things that this government had done over the last five years for seniors.

Let me once again remind the members opposite that since we were elected in June of 1999, the Minister of Health and myself have announced the Alzheimer's strategy. This is the first province across the country that has introduced a strategy, and in that we're making sure that seniors have more care, that daycare workers have more education. There's no question that we have that.

In addition to that, the other thing that's important to recognize is that we introduced the elder abuse round table in the last few weeks. What we've said on that is that abuse of seniors is against the law, and we're going to work with police to make sure that happens. I'm going to co-chair this round table with Dr Elizabeth Podnieks, who is an expert in elder abuse, and we're going to make sure that we work on things that will make seniors safe in their communities.

Mrs Dombrowsky: Yesterday I had the opportunity to have breakfast with the executive director of the Alzheimer Society of Toronto, so I'm very aware of the initiatives in that particular area, which actually have nothing to do with the conditions in retirement homes in the province.

With respect to the elder abuse round table, I am very happy to hear the minister talk about it again today but there certainly are questions, and questions within the senior representative groups in the province, around who is part of the round table panel, when will it report, what will it recommend.

My question again to the minister responsible for seniors' issues is, what action is this government prepared to take today to address the immediate and deplorable conditions in retirement homes in Ontario?

Hon Mrs Johns: I'd like to comment directly on that question. I know the member recognizes there are a number of things that governments have done with respect to the retirement industry. She should also recognize there are a number of things that municipalities have the responsibility to do and are doing.

Let me just remind you that in the city of Toronto they are now out there looking carefully at different homes. I read in the paper this morning that they're out looking at different retirement homes to make sure that services are being provided properly. In other words, the municipalities have the right to do that. They should enforce bylaws that they have and they should move forward.

I know the member across is new to the House and I'd like to just remind her of what the Liberals said when they were in power in 1989. They suggested at that time, in a report they had prepared, that the municipalities should be empowered to regulate retirement homes. We of course don't go that far—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. New question, the member for Perth-Middlesex.

Interjections.

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): If I had thought I could raise that much, I'd have spoken sooner.

WOMEN'S HEALTH

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. It was my pleasure to welcome you to Stratford recently for a very important announcement regarding women's health.

Breast cancer is an important concern for the women of Perth-Middlesex. I know that studies have shown that

organized breast screening programs for women over 50 can reduce breast cancer deaths by 30%.

Two years ago the Premier officially opened the Ontario breast screening program site at the Listowel Memorial Hospital. Last Friday, you were at Stratford General Hospital to launch a new program. In a few weeks this program will be expanded to the Jenny Trout Centre.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I interrupt the member. Again I say to the members, I cannot hear the member's question. I need to hear the member's question, so I will be calling order.

The member for Perth-Middlesex.

Mr Johnson: In two weeks the Listowel Memorial Hospital will officially open its new breast health clinic, which will be the only one of its kind in southwestern Ontario. I'm proud the government is making women's health a priority.

Minister, can you please tell the people of Ontario about the good work being done in Perth-Middlesex and, specifically, about the Jenny Trout breast cancer screening clinic?

1510

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I did have the pleasure of being at Stratford hospital last Friday. I was very pleased at that time to open the Ontario breast screening program centre at the Stratford hospital. It is going to be expanded to include the Jenny Trout Centre. Again, it reinforces the commitment that our government has made to women's health in this province and specifically to early detection and screening for breast cancer.

The Jenny Trout Centre will be the 12th centre that has opened in the last seven months. For the women in Stratford and the surrounding area it means that up to an additional 2,000 women will be screened. Again, it will mean that fewer women will die from breast cancer.

Mr Johnson: This is great news for the people of Perth-Middlesex. It will allow my constituents to receive this important service closer to home. Could you tell the House what our government is doing across the province with respect to Ontario breast screening programs?

Hon Mrs Witmer: As I indicated, women's health is a priority for our government. Another priority of course is to ensure that we focus on prevention of illness and the promotion of wellness. Our government has made a commitment to the Ontario breast screening program. We have invested over and above \$24 million. At the end of that time period, as we screen more and more women throughout Ontario, we know that those women who are between the ages of 50 to 69 will be the beneficiaries and that one third of those women will not die as a result of breast cancer because of the screening that is being initiated. We look forward to continuing to expand this program throughout the province.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Today, the CAA presented 8,000 petitions to you on Highway 401 safety. There have been 26 deaths on Highway 401 in Chatham-Kent Essex. You drove carnage alley and called it a pleasant drive. Only after one of the most horrific accidents in Ontario history did you finally admit to the serious problems in this stretch of highway.

Minister, your improvements fall seriously short. Your government's twisted sense of priorities are an insult to the accident victims and their families. Fatalities in Chatham-Kent are up more than 500%. Last week, another life was lost that might have been saved by a centre barrier or photo radar on this treacherous part of the road.

Don't give me your arrogant spin on the government's record. Just tell me how much public pressure it will take and how many more deaths before you upgrade the highway with centre medians, extra lanes and fully paved shoulders on both sides.

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): I thank the honourable member for the question. It is truly tragic that even one life is lost on our roads in this province. We are the fourth-safest highway administration in North America, but we can do better.

Everybody knows that since we have increased traffic on our highways, it is incumbent upon everybody to drive more safely. This is why I put in place a five-point action plan which went beyond what was called for by the ministry study. The five-point plan is as follows: Increased enforcement for the Chatham-Kent area. We have added 22 OPP officers, 21 new truck inspection officers for the southwestern region. We have taken immediate action on the highway. We have already commenced fully paving the right-hand shoulder three metres wide with rumble strips. We are paving—

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

Supplementary.

Mr Hoy: Minister, you tell us often that driver error is to blame for accidents. That's not exactly rocket science, is it? The question is, why do accidents become fatalities? Many safety experts tell us it's because this road is narrow and unforgiving. Fatalities are not off the chart everywhere else.

Tell me, Minister, why won't you consider photo radar to save lives on this treacherous stretch of highway?

Hon Mr Turnbull: The honourable member will understand that our government is placing the priority on roads and infrastructure. That is why this year we have the highest budget in provincial history.

I want to point out some of the support that I have received for the five-point action plan. The Ontario Provincial Police Association endorsed the crackdown on aggressive driving. The Canada Safety Council welcomes and supports the five-point program. The Insurance

Bureau of Canada supports the five-point plan for safer roads in Ontario—the Ontario Safety League.

These are real actions, but we have to ask everyone to be part of the plan to make our roads the safest. We need everybody to buy into the fact that we have to obey the laws. That is important. That is why I'm forming an advisory panel of experts—

The Speaker: Order. New question.

ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): My question is to the Chair of Management Board. In the Blueprint our party made a commitment to make government work smarter, faster, better. I know that over the past few years our government has introduced a number of initiatives to help put service back into government, or actually put it into customer service for the public service.

Can you tell me, Minister, what has the government done to improve our customer service for the people of our province so far?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I want to thank the member for Brampton Centre, a member who works extremely hard on behalf of his constituents and the people of Ontario, for that insightful question.

Yes, it's true that we are making government work for the people of Ontario again in improving customer service. There are a number of initiatives that our government has undertaken to improve how and when and where the people of Ontario can access the government—some examples of using technology such as putting Publications Ontario on-line to allow the public to order documents from the Ontario Archives 24 hours a day, not just on the old government hours.

We've also introduced a number of self-serve kiosks that are conveniently located right across the province.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Hodgson: I realize the Liberals aren't interested in improving customer service, but we think that's very important. We think it's very important that government work for the people of Ontario and not the other way around.

We have also introduced 57 government information centres that are in the process of opening their doors to offer one-stop information service to the public.

1520

Mr Spina: I'm pleased that the minister indicated the opening of the government information centres. Just recently we opened one of those info centres in the city of Brampton. What we haven't seen is a clear understanding of how these government information centres can work for the benefit of the public so that they can more easily access government services.

Hon Mr Hodgson: Thank you to the member for Brampton Centre for another good question.

The opening of these centres will allow the public to have a one-stop resource place for information and puts an end to a lot of government run-around which people

have experienced, at least for the decade that the Liberals and NDP were in power.

Most importantly, in the past if you wanted to get simple registration forms you would have to go to a number of government offices. This should put an end to that and allow for one-stop shopping, so to speak. We no longer accept the answer, "This is not my department," and you have to drive five or 10 minutes down the road to get a simple form.

I'd like to point out to the people of Ontario who are interested that the staff at these counters are very dedicated to providing the best service possible and they've come up with a number of innovative ideas to make life simpler in Ontario. For example, a lot of people lose their wallets. In the past they would have had to stop at five or 10 different stops and fill out different forms. Now at these centres you can get a lost-wallet package. That idea came right from our front-line staff in Stratford and I'd just like to say thank you to them for a great idea, and there will be more to come in the years to follow.

ACCESS TO CHAMBER

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Earlier in the day there was a gentleman who was conducting what would have to be described as a peaceful protest. He was engaged in a hunger strike, obviously at risk to himself with this approach but not at risk to anybody else. He wanted to be able to come in and watch the day's proceedings. He was informed that he would not be able to come and attend in the public gallery because he had been protesting. He was in fact admitted. I want to make that clear. The security spoke to me and because I felt that he was not a risk to this place, they were prepared to admit him.

I just want to raise it nevertheless as a point of order. I appreciated the co-operation that the security provided in coming and speaking to me directly about this individual, but obviously there are many people who have concerns and want to register their protests.

I would ask if you would review the provisions that are put in place for admitting people to the public galleries. Many people who will protest and would like to come in and watch and are not putting us in any risk and have a right to hear the deliberations could be barred because they haven't made contact with an MPP. I would ask if you would review this to determine under what conditions any member of the public who may or may not have concerns with the actions of the government could be admitted to the public gallery or could be denied admission to the public gallery.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I thank the member for bringing it to my attention and I will investigate.

PETITIONS

HENLEY ROWING COURSE

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition here. It's extremely important and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Henley rowing course in St Catharines is an outstanding rowing facility which has for several decades been the site of hundreds of international rowing competitions;

"Whereas the World Rowing Championship has been held in St Catharines in 1970 and 1999 and has been declared an outstanding success on both occasions;

"Whereas the municipal, provincial and federal governments, along with generous private donors, invested several million dollars in the upgrading of the Henley rowing course to enable the 1999 World Rowing Championship to be held in St Catharines and that as a result the Henley is a first-class rowing facility;

"Whereas the organizing committee of the World Rowing Championship, the annual Royal Canadian Henley Regatta and other prestigious regattas, has the proven expertise to operate major, international rowing competitions;

"Whereas all taxpayers in Ontario will be compelled to contribute to any financial assistance provided by the Ontario government for the Olympic bid for the city of Toronto;

"Whereas the creation of a new rowing facility outside of St Catharines for the Toronto Olympic bid would result in the unnecessary expenditure of millions of dollars to duplicate the St Catharines rowing facility;

"Whereas the rowing facility for several, recent Olympic Games has been located outside the sponsoring and host city;

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to persuade the Toronto Olympic bid committee to propose the Henley rowing course in St Catharines as a site of the rowing competition for the 2008 Olympic Games."

I affix my signature as I'm in complete agreement with this petition.

PARAMEDICS

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): This is a petition for justice for ambulance paramedics:

"To the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

"Whereas this amended regulation has resulted in at least one paramedic being fired from employment; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health's regulation is far more punitive and harsh than the Ministry of Transportation's, which monitors and enforces traffic safety through the Highway Traffic Act; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mr Speaker, I am in total agreement with this and will affix my signature to it.

HOUSING PROJECT

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition signed by a number of my constituents in Scarborough Southwest which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the city of Toronto is making plans to move 60 to 70 men into 1673 Kingston Road, and;

"Whereas they are doing this without community consultation and without regard to the safety of children in the area;

"We, the undersigned, petition to have this project stopped immediately."

I have affixed my name to this petition.

AIR QUALITY

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the effluent coming from the commercial alcohol ethanol plant is creating a noxious smell in the former city of Chatham, in the municipality of Chatham-Kent, which has a nauseating impact on the citizens who breathe it, and;

"Whereas the citizens of Chatham have repeatedly brought this problem to the attention of the Ontario Ministry of the Environment and the former MPP for Chatham-Kent, and;

"Whereas the former MPP for Chatham-Kent and the Ministry of the Environment indicated that Commercial Alcohols was given an eight-month period to correct the problem, which time elapsed on July 1999, and the problem has not been remedied, and;

"Whereas the current Environmental Protection Act, section 5(6) clearly states: No person shall cause or permit to be caused the emission of any air contaminant to such an extent or degree as may cause discomfort to persons, cause loss of enjoyment of normal use of property, and interfere with the normal conduct of business,' and;

"Whereas the citizens of Chatham-Kent Essex believe that they have the right to clean air and that Commercial Alcohols Inc must be subject to the environmental law in place to protect citizens;

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

"That the measures contained in regulation 346 of the Environmental Protection Act be immediately enforced on Commercial Alcohols Inc to ensure that the citizens of Chatham and the surrounding area have fresh air to breathe, free from the noxious odours that are spewed by the ethanol plant located on Bloomfield Road in the westerly outskirts of the former city of Chatham in the municipality of Chatham-Kent, and we ask for the support of all members of the Legislature."

I affix my name to this petition.

1530

COURT DECISION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I am reading a petition on behalf of my constituents, Sylvia Jasper-Fayer, Renee Boulma, Elaine Vanttarting, Maria Easterbrook and a number of constituents.

"We, the undersigned, wish to express our support for the use of section 33 of the Constitution Act, 1982, to stop changes to the Ontario Family Law Act as a result of the M v H decision."

I know this petition isn't in the proper format, but out of respect for my constituents I do submit it for the record.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas the hospitals in the Niagara region that have incurred deficits as a result of underfunding by the Harris government are being forced to cut services to patients even more than in the past few years;

"Whereas services for patients in our hospitals have already been cut as a result of budget slashing by the Conservative government of Mike Harris;

"Whereas Niagara hospitals may be compelled to impose user fees and increase user fees already in effect;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Harris government provide significantly increased funding to Niagara hospi-

tals' operating budgets to avoid further cuts to patient services and to restore services that have been eliminated in the past."

I affix my signature to this petition as I am in complete agreement with its contents.

MARRIAGE

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey): Mr Speaker, congratulations on your new job.

I have a petition signed by around 200 people from my area. It is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the majority of Ontarians understand the concept of marriage as only the voluntary union of a single male and a single female;

"Whereas it is the duty of the Legislature to ensure that marriage, as it has always been known and understood in Ontario, be preserved and protected;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature to use all possible legislative and administrative measures, including invoking section 33 of the Canadian Constitution (the notwithstanding clause), to protect marriage in law so that marriage can only be entered into between a single male and a single female."

TAXATION

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): A local group called RATH, Residents Against Tax Hikes, continues to gather petitions titled "Freeze Taxes and Restructure Government."

"Whereas the Haldimand-Norfolk region has downloaded a 17% tax hike on residents, without attempting to cut its own costs; and

"Whereas for the past 25 years there have been meetings, petitions, referenda and studies calling for a restructuring of regional government; and

"Whereas 80% of the residents did not want regional government in the first place, and in recent referendums, 75% of the residents of the city of Nanticoke and 60% of the residents of the town of Simcoe voted against retaining regional government; and

"Whereas residents in the region do not want and clearly cannot afford two levels of municipal government;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully request that provincial legislation be passed to freeze taxes and restructure government in Haldimand-Norfolk, and institute a form of restructured local government in keeping with the wishes and the financial means of the local residents."

I hereby affix my name to this petition.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): We continue to receive hundreds of petitions related to the northern health travel grant.

"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 support this very strongly. I am very proud to add my name to this petition.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Further petitions, the member for London West.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Not quite.

The Acting Speaker: I'm sorry. I looked over there a few minutes ago—

Mr Christopherson: Thank you, Speaker. I certainly can't argue that you've got some kind of bias against the party I'm a member of, but I would ask you to remember this corner of the place.

The Acting Speaker: OK. The member for Hamilton West.

Mr Christopherson: Thank you and, by the way, congratulations on your ascension to the Chair.

PARAMEDICS

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

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

"Whereas this amended regulation has resulted in at least one paramedic being fired from employment ... "

The number now is actually six, Speaker, two from Hamilton.

"Whereas the Ministry of Health's regulation is far more punitive and harsh than the Ministry of Transportation, which monitors and enforces traffic safety through the Highway Traffic Act; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I proudly add my name to those of these petitioners in support of the paramedics.

PALLIATIVE CARE

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Further petitions, the member for London West.

Mr Bob Wood (London West): Mr Speaker, may I first congratulate you on your election as Deputy Chair. I know that you're going to serve the House well.

I have a petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas most Ontario residents require adequate access to effective hospice and palliative care in times of need; and

"Whereas meeting the needs of Ontarians of all backgrounds and ages for relief of preventable pain and suffering, as well as the provision of emotional and spiritual support, should be a priority for our health care system; and

"Whereas this Legislature resolved, unanimously, to support the resolution introduced by Bob Wood, MPP, calling for a hospice palliative care bill of rights and a comprehensive province-wide system of hospice and palliative care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the government to quickly appoint the task force needed to fulfill this great need. Ontarians needing care must receive the best possible treatment,

care, protection and comfort. The provision of care by family members and community volunteers must be encouraged and supported.

“The task force should fully consider the experience of Ontario’s professional and community experts in hospice and palliative care, from every professional field and medical specialty involved in the provision of hospice palliative care, and as well, consult with Ontario citizens, of all backgrounds, about their needs;

“The task force should determine the best medical principles and most advanced methods for the enhancement of our right to life and care, with special attention to developing effective medical and procedural safeguards for those who can, or who can no longer, decide issues of medical care for themselves.”

1540

VISITORS

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): I would like to inform the members of the Legislative Assembly that we have in the Speaker’s gallery today mayors from the Alto-Alentejo and Baixo-Alentejo regions of Portugal, accompanied by Mr John Ferreira, Toronto. Please join me in welcoming our guests.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

DÉBAT SUR LE DISCOURS DU TRÔNE

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for an address in reply to the speech of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): The leader of the official opposition.

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Let me tell you that it’s good to be back. I would have preferred to be sitting on your right-hand side, but that was not to be this time.

I want to take the opportunity to congratulate you, Mr Speaker, in your capacity as a new deputy speaker, as well as Michael Brown, a member of our caucus, and of course our new Speaker upon his election. You’ve all been entrusted with the very special responsibility of protecting the rights and privileges of every member of this House, but I would say you have a very special responsibility to ensure that the rights of members of the opposition parties are recognized.

So I say to you, Mr Speaker, and through you to our elected Speaker and the other deputy speaker, that you have our full support on every occasion and in each and every instance where you rule in our favour.

I want at the outset to thank the people of my riding, the people of Ottawa South, for once again placing their faith in me. It is an honour and a privilege for me to be back here in a position to serve my constituents.

Although I have other obligations, particularly as leader of my party, I don’t forget where I come from, who sent me and what I was sent to do. I think it would serve all of us well to remember that, first and foremost, our duties here are owed to our constituents.

I also want to take the opportunity to congratulate all members on their election or re-election. I congratulate the Premier. I congratulate the government. It’s not easy to put your name forward. It’s not easy on us and it’s not easy on our families. But we do this because we care about our families, about our communities, about our province and about our country.

“Care” is a very important word and I think it would serve us all well from time to time to remind ourselves that the reason we get into politics in the first place is quite simply because we care. From my perspective, the very best way to show that we care about Ontario is by taking care to ensure that all Ontarians find here in our province a ladder of opportunity to climb to success. As for those in our province who can’t climb—our sick, our poor, our children, our frail elderly, our homeless and our disabled—all these, from my perspective, we should embrace and care for, knowing that quite simply that is the right thing to do, and understanding in our heart of hearts that, but for fate, we would be them and they would be us.

My father had the seat before me. I had the opportunity to observe him in his role as an MPP and prior to that as a locally elected representative on our school board. He did that for a dozen years or so. My observations made me absolutely convinced that there was no way I ever wanted to put my head in the political wringer. There was no way I ever wanted to seek political office, for all the usual negatives that are connected with political office today in Ontario and indeed North America. We seem to have to contend with so much cynicism felt for all things and all persons political. We’re called to spend a tremendous amount of time away from our homes—politics can be a jealous mistress—and we’re often called upon in our very diverse society with so many freedoms to reconcile the seemingly irreconcilable. That means politics is particularly challenging.

But when my father passed away very suddenly, one of the things that he used to impress upon me and my brothers and sisters—our mother spoke to this as well—he used to tell us that it would never, ever be good enough simply to get up in the morning and go to work and pay taxes and that we all had a responsibility to find some way to build upon those successes that had been handed down to us by previous generations on a silver platter.

One of the things I realized as time went on was that there were many things that only government can do to help people. I realized that government had an important and essential role to play in our lives. It does that by providing things like good schools and hospitals, a clean environment, safe highways and safe communities. So I say to the members opposite and I say to the Premier as well, there is no shame in being a part of government.

There is no need for duplicity. You cannot at the same time sit on your right-hand side and not be government. You are the government and you should take pride in that. You should recognize that government is fundamentally not about policies, programs and budgets; it's all about people and it's about improving life for people, especially those people who face challenges that are simply too big for them to overcome on their own.

When I was first elected to the Legislature as a rookie, I sat over there in the farthest reaches of this Legislature and I felt for sure that on a clear day I could see the Speaker. I thought to myself when I first arrived and I occupied that seat: "How will I ever exert any influence in this place? How could I ever help the folks back home?"

But as a rookie MPP, I succeeded in doing a few things of which I'm very proud. I changed the law in Ontario to make it easier for people to make contributions to our food banks, I worked hard to ensure that CPR was taught in all of my community high schools so that our young people will be equipped with the skill to save lives, and I was responsible for bringing paramedics to Ottawa. I did all that from a seat in the back row.

I say that so that all members here, but particularly backbenchers in the government and others who don't sit in the front row, understand that they can exert a very real influence for good, no matter which seat you occupy here. Don't get caught in the Queen's Park trap of thinking that only the Premier and cabinet can get things done around here. We, all of us, each and every one of us, have an opportunity to make a difference and help people, and we should, all of us, seize that opportunity.

Mr Speaker, you will have noticed that since the Legislature last met there have been a few changes. I'm not talking about the carpet here; I'm talking about my party. I'm pleased to report that my party was the only party to have its caucus grow in size as the result of the last election. While I'm disappointed that we fell short of our goal, I am very proud of the fact that we have 35 members in our caucus today, that we are a team that combines energy with experience. We have nine new members, nine former cabinet ministers and 26 veteran.

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What I want to do now, Speaker, is take the opportunity to introduce the nine new members of our caucus to you, to this House and to Ontario.

George Smitherman is the new member of Parliament for Toronto Centre-Rosedale. He has been given responsibility as the Liberal GTA critic and our science and technology critic. Prior to his election, George served as a senior Toronto adviser to the Honourable David Collenette and the Honourable Herb Gray. He was also chief of staff to Toronto mayor Barbara Hall.

Steve Peters is my new member for Elgin-Middlesex-London. Prior to Steve's election, he was the popular three-term mayor of St Thomas. As our advocate for the disabled, Steve is already working hard in leading our fight for a real and meaningful Ontarian's With Disabilities Act.

Ernie Parsons—Landslide Parsons, as he's affectionately known in our caucus—is the new member for Prince Edward-Hastings. When I looked to my caucus to find someone to give responsibility for the important training portfolio, the choice was perfectly clear. A professional engineer, Ernie not only taught technology courses at Loyalist College for 25 years; he was also a trustee for 17 years on the local school board, serving as chair for six of those years.

Dave Levac is my new member for Brant and our Solicitor General critic. Dave's a pillar in his community. His many years of community involvement were officially recognized when he was named Brant county's citizen of the year quite recently. Prior to his election, Dave worked as an elementary school teacher and principal for 20 years.

Leona Dombrowsky is the new member for Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington. One of the very first things she may want to do is introduce a bill shortening the name of her riding. Leona has been given responsibility as the Liberal caucus seniors critic, a task which she has warmed to with her typical zeal. Prior to her election, Leona served as chair of her local separate school board for five consecutive terms.

Caroline Di Cocco is the new member for Sarnia-Lambton. A municipal councillor in Sarnia, Caroline worked hard to build her reputation as someone who fought to ensure that taxpayers were getting value for their hard-earned tax dollars. A former music teacher, Caroline has always been a strong advocate for the arts, and continues to be as our party's culture critic.

Michael Bryant is the new member for St Paul's and the Liberal Attorney General critic. Michael is a lawyer, Mr Speaker, but I can assure you that he does have redeeming qualities. I say that because I'm a lawyer. As such, I'm entitled to make those kinds of jokes. Michael is a graduate of both Harvard Law School and Osgoode Hall, and he served as a law clerk at the Supreme Court of Canada prior to practising and teaching law.

J'ai le plaisir aussi de vous présenter Claudette Boyer. Claudette est la nouvelle députée d'Ottawa-Vanier et elle occupe les fonctions de critique de notre parti aux Affaires francophones et à la Condition féminine. Claudette est la première Franco-Ontarienne à devenir députée de l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario. Avant son élection, Claudette faisait partie du conseil d'administration de l'Association canadienne-française de l'Ontario. Claudette a également été conseillère au sein du Conseil de l'éducation d'Ottawa et présidente de sa section locale de la Fédération des enseignants francophones.

Marie Bountrogianni is the new member for Hamilton Mountain. Prior to her election, Marie was the chief psychologist for the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board. Marie is perfectly suited as our colleges and universities critic, as she has studied at the University of Toronto, Waterloo, and she's taught courses at McMaster, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Seneca College and Ryerson.

I take a great deal of pride in introducing my nine new Liberal members to this Legislature. I said earlier that these nine new members join a team that combines energy with experience. I'm proud to say that they also join a team with a track record of putting forward positive solutions to Ontario's problems. Take, for example, the following initiatives of Liberal MPPs:

Richard Patten and his proposals for mental health reforms.

Pat Hoy and his innovative approach to improving school bus safety for Ontario children.

Monte Kwinter and his private member's bill to recognize alternative medicines and the role they can play today.

Rick Bartolucci and his tough legislation to tackle the exploitation of children as prostitutes.

Sandra Pupatello, who worked with me on our First Steps children's proposals that first proposed family medical leave in Ontario and legislation to stop the early eviction of women and their babies from hospitals after birth.

Mike Colle and his campaign for red-light cameras to save lives on Ontario streets.

Jean-Marc Lalonde and his work to stop the discrimination against Ontario construction workers in the province of Quebec.

We have put forward and will continue to put forward these kinds of solutions. In fact, just a few weeks ago, I'm pleased to report that our health critic, Lyn McLeod, released a package of proposals to bring doctors to our underserved communities. The only thing we lack now is a government that is willing to listen and to act on our solutions.

I can tell you that I had hoped for a signal in the throne speech that there were going to be other changes around here. I had hoped we would have a government that was willing to listen and to work together to make this province a better place for all Ontarians.

J'espérais que le gouvernement serait prêt à écouter et à travailler avec nous tous pour faire de la province un meilleur endroit pour vivre, travailler et élever une famille. J'espérais qu'après quatre mois complets de planification, le discours du trône aurait promis de signaler une nouvelle approche.

I had hoped that after more than four full months of planning, the throne speech would have signalled a new approach that would have contained a vision for taking Ontario boldly into the new millennium, that would have spoken to the real concerns of the people of Ontario. Unfortunately, the throne speech did none of those things. It was an empty throne speech from an arrogant government.

The throne speech was proof that this government is too arrogant to even acknowledge Ontarians' real problems. There was much talk in the throne speech of crackdowns, but we on this side of the House ask: Where was the crackdown on hospital deficits? Where was the crackdown on sky-high tuition? Where was the crackdown on the carnage on our highways, on the gridlock on

our streets? Where was the crackdown on the homelessness in our communities?

Only four months into its mandate, the government is already running on empty: empty promises, empty rhetoric and an empty throne speech. The throne speech is chock full of empty phrases like "task force," "action plan" and "demonstration project."

More than anything else, the record of this government since the election screams arrogance. The throne speech talks about accountability, but for three weeks Mike Harris held onto Steven Gilchrist when he was under police investigation for allegations that taxpayers weren't allowed access to him without going through his fundraiser and lawyer.

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The throne speech talks about protecting taxpayers, but since the election the Premier has increased the size of his cabinet. Originally, it was a cabinet that was the size of 19; now it's 25.

Mike Harris has doubled the size of his office staff.

He's resurrected former Speaker Al McLean, showering him with patronage after he left this Legislature under a cloud of sexual harassment.

Mike Harris has given political staff 30% pay hikes after wasting over \$100 million in taxpayers' money on partisan advertising prior to the last election.

The throne speech says the government works for the people because this is a democracy. But this is the government that allowed the people's Legislature to sit for just seven days during the past 10 months.

The throne speech talks about acceptable health care. But this is the government that cut \$870 million from Ontario hospitals, affecting the quality of care and leaving more than half of our hospitals with deficits totalling more than \$100 million. This is the government that more and more is refusing to take responsibility for the health care of our sick who are not found inside a hospital.

The throne speech talks about hiring nurses, but this is the government that's fired thousands of nurses, leaving Ontario with the fewest nurses per capita in Canada and, more importantly, leaving Ontarians waiting for hours in hospital hallways and corridors without proper care.

The throne speech talks about quality education, but this is the government that has taken tuition through the roof, forced the closure of schools and done nothing to address the crying need for special education.

The actions of two Hamilton MPPs in the face of a desperate community need I find particularly telling. In the middle of October—I'm not sure if the circumstances obtain to this very day—23 students with special needs in Ontario were still not attending school. The parents of Hamilton-Wentworth and their school board appealed to the local government MPPs for help. They were looking for additional funding to hire more educational assistants.

Do you know how the local MPPs responded to this plea for help? Instead of going to bat for the boards and the kids and the parents, they demanded that an audit be conducted of the school board affairs. It seems to me that these members forgot that they're here to represent the

interests of those parents and of those children and of those duly elected school board representatives.

The throne speech talks about protecting the environment. But this is the government that gutted environmental protection, making Ontario the second-worst polluter in North America, after Texas.

In a wonderful display of both arrogance and hypocrisy, the Premier recently sided with the US Environmental Protection Agency because it has brought in new, strict emission laws. These new laws will be helpful to Ontario because, as everybody knows, the US is responsible for 50% of our smog. But what Mike Harris won't talk about is the fact that Ontario's own coal-fired generating stations do not meet the new American EPA standards. We had a plan that we put forward during the course of the campaign. We had a plan to convert coal-fired electrical generating stations in Ontario to gas-fired.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I don't want to put you on the spot in the time you have been in the chair, and I think it may have slipped by you, but I think "hypocrisy" may be out of order, accusing the government of being hypocrites.

The Acting Speaker: I would ask the leader of the official opposition to withdraw the word "hypocrisy," if he would.

Mr McGuinty: I withdraw it, Speaker.

The throne speech talks about a balanced budget, and apparently soon, but this is a government that has borrowed \$10 billion at prime-plus on international markets for tax cuts and added \$23 billion to our long-term debt. I don't claim to be prescient, I don't claim that I can see into the future, but I can say with absolute certainty that Ontario's children will not thank Mike Harris for borrowing \$10 billion to give today's tax-paying generation some kind of break.

The throne speech talks about roads, but there is no additional money in what we call the "super fraud fund," so there is no end in sight to the gridlock that costs our economy an estimated \$3 billion each and every year, and there is no plan to improve safety on the 401 and major roadways.

The throne speech talks about the disabled, but what it says is really an insult to that community. After five years, four promises and three ministers, Mike Harris's only commitment was to introduce a new action plan in this session. Now, whether you call it a plan or an action plan, we in this Legislature know what that means. It's a euphemism for doing nothing of substance. Ontario's disabled don't want an action plan; they want legislation. To remind the Premier, he did not promise an action plan; he promised legislation. So the question that I ask on behalf of Ontario's disabled community is: Why not just get on with the job, be the government, be the Premier and introduce legislation?

Monsieur le Président, j'ai dit à nos partisans le soir de l'élection que notre bataille n'était pas terminée, que nous devons continuer à nous battre pour ces choses sur lesquelles les familles de l'Ontario doivent pouvoir

compter : de bonnes écoles, de bons hôpitaux, de bons soins de santé, un bon réseau d'enseignement, un gouvernement honnête qui partage leurs inquiétudes et qui travaille avec eux pour trouver des solutions à leurs problèmes. En leur nom, je répète cet après-midi la promesse que j'ai faite le soir de l'élection : notre bataille n'est pas terminée. J'ai le grand privilège de mener cette lutte, la lutte de la population, au nom de tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes.

I had one of my assistants go through the throne speech and scan it at some length. It seems to me that in the grand scheme of things one of the things you want to do with a throne speech, because it really is an exceptional opportunity for the government—it's not a bill, it's not crafted by lawyers and it's not designed to speak to an immediate problem. It's a real opportunity for a government to lay out its priorities, and maybe more than that, it's an opportunity to lift all Ontarians up and to remind us of how we are connected, of how we've got to work together to meet the challenges of the day, of how important it is to reach out to people who find themselves in need. It should be filled with positive references, not negatives.

I went through the throne speech in some detail, and we find three negative references to the federal government. I assume there is much more of that to come. There are three references to mandatory or zero-tolerance policies. There are three references to crackdowns. There are nine references to discipline programs.

1610

There are five references to real people. Real people, to take a close look at the throne speech, are people who have found success in one way, shape or form or another. I'm not sure this government considers people in need to be real people. Our homeless are real people. Our disabled are real people. People who can't work because they're sick are real people. Children growing up at risk, are they real people? Our frail elderly, are they real people? If you follow this throne speech through to its logical conclusion in the eyes of this government, those people are not real people.

The other thing you find again in this throne speech is the Premier's passionate desire to turn government into a business operation. He talks about the need to ensure that we're looking after our customers or clients. That's not what government is all about, Speaker, and I know you understand that. Government is not a business. There's no doubt we can learn certain things from business—we can learn how to deliver services more efficiently—but ultimately government is not a business.

The purpose of business is to look after business. The purpose of business is to ensure that there is a fair return for the investors in the business. The purpose of business is to deal with those people who bring something to you. That's not the purpose of government. The purpose of government, at least one special responsibility of government, is to ensure that we're looking after people who have difficulty looking after themselves.

That is not something we shrink from as Liberals. I know it's high fashion in many circles today to speak about the fiscal aspects of government—and it is important that we get our finances under control, it is important that we understand taxes are an issue—but that does not absolve us of our continuing responsibility to make sure that each and every Ontarian finds opportunity here.

If we think about it for a time, those of us who find ourselves in this Legislature, those of us who have arrived in Ontario, those of us who enjoy success throughout this province, have been able to do so, by and large, because we had opportunity there. We had a ladder we could climb. One of those rungs was good health care. Another rung might be good public education. Another rung might be affordable college and university. Those are the kinds of things that have shaped our province. Those are the real sources of our strength. Government has a continuing responsibility from our perspective to strengthen that ladder and, at the same time, to understand that from time to time there will be people who can't climb. We embrace that responsibility as well. That's not something we shrink from either.

I told our supporters on election night that our fight is not over. We've got to continue to fight for those things that Ontario families simply need to be able to count on, things like good schools and good hospitals, good health care, good education and an honest government that shares their concerns and works together with all Ontarians to find solutions to our collective problems.

Over 40% of Ontarians voted Liberal. Over 1.8 million Ontarians voted Liberal in the last election and more than half of Ontario voters said, "We want change." They said they don't want any more cuts to our health care. They don't want any more cuts to our education and they want the persistent fighting to grind to a halt. They said they want us to start working together so that, together, we might embrace all of the opportunities that the 21st century holds for us and our children. On their behalf I repeat my election night pledge once again this October afternoon: Our fight is not over and it is my great privilege to lead this fight, the people's fight on behalf of all Ontarians.

Mr Speaker, I have a motion.

I, seconded by Mrs Papatello, move an amendment to the government motion on the throne speech by adding the following thereto:

Whereas the throne speech was an empty speech from an arrogant government; and

Whereas the Harris government clearly wished to avoid taking responsibility for its decisions to double the size of the Premier's office, give 30% raises to its top political staff and shower patronage on the likes of Al McLean by allowing the Legislature to sit only seven days in the first 10 months of this year; and

Whereas the Harris government failed to signal a new approach, failed to outline a vision for taking Ontario boldly into the new millennium and failed to address the real concerns of Ontario residents; and

Whereas the throne speech was silent on such important issues as hospital deficits, sky-high tuition, carnage on our highways, gridlock on our streets and homelessness in our communities; and

Whereas the Harris government is clearly out of touch and its throne speech proved it has the wrong priorities;

This House profoundly regrets that the Harris government continues to act in such an arrogant manner on an agenda which will continue to cause significant hardship for our youngest, our oldest, our sickest and our least fortunate in society.

The Acting Speaker: Mr McGuinty has moved an amendment:

Whereas the throne speech was an empty speech from an arrogant government; and

Interjection: Dispense.

Interjections: No, go ahead.

The Acting Speaker: Whereas the Harris government clearly wished to avoid taking responsibility for its decisions to double the size of the Premier's office, give 30% raises to its top political staff and shower patronage on the likes of Al McLean by allowing the Legislature to sit only seven days in the first 10 months of this year; and

Whereas the Harris government failed to signal a new approach, failed to outline a vision for taking Ontario boldly into the new millennium and failed to address the real concerns of Ontario residents; and

Whereas the throne speech was silent on such important issues as hospital deficits, sky-high tuition, carnage on our highways, gridlock on our streets and homelessness in our communities; and

Whereas the Harris government is clearly out of touch and its throne speech proved it has the wrong priorities;

This House profoundly regrets that the Harris government continues to act in such an arrogant manner on an agenda which will continue to cause significant hardship for our youngest, our oldest, our sickest and our least fortunate in society.

Further debate?

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): As is the tradition of this place, I move adjournment of the debate.

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

Orders of the day.

Hon Chris Stockwell: Mr Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to allow the NDP to stand down their lead debate on the throne speech reply, and debate would resume this evening.

The Acting Speaker: Unanimous consent has been requested for the third party to stand down their leadoff speech. Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I move the House adjourn until 6:30 this evening.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried. This House stands adjourned until 6:30 this evening.

The House adjourned at 1621.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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