



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

First Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Première session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 18 November 1999

Jedi 18 novembre 1999

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

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*The House met at 1004.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): Good morning. The resolution we have before the House today reads: If the government's current initiatives fail to correct the doctor distribution problem throughout Ontario, then the government should proclaim sections of the Savings and Restructuring Act, 1996, allowing it to attach geographic areas to all new billing numbers issued by the Ministry of Health.

I rise today to talk about a topic which all of us in this Legislature, save and except perhaps a few people in a few areas, deal with every day in growing numbers and with growing frequency, and that is the problem with doctor distribution around the province of Ontario. Many of us MPPs quite often have phone calls from people in distress who can't find a family doctor in their hometown; people who the odd time are mistreated by their family doctor because that poor doctor has so many patients they're looking at in their community that they're suffering from burnout. One patient told me, "I wanted a second opinion and my doctor told me, 'If you want a second opinion then I'm not going to have you on my patient list any more.'" I don't want to say all doctors are doing that. I just point out that these are some of the stresses some doctors are under with the problem we currently have.

We look at the problem and there are a lot of solutions—some of which I'm going to talk about today—being proposed and a lot of attempts being undertaken to address the problem. The public looks at the problem and says: "Why don't we just have more doctors in the province? Why don't we just open the floodgates to foreign countries and from other places in Canada and have other provincial doctors come in, open up more spaces in medical schools and so on?" But the problem with that is what we have in Ontario—and many people recognize this—is a problem with distribution, not necessarily supply.

In fact, a very recent study by Dr Ben Chan from the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences says that the Ministry of Health and the OMA have long recognized that there's a geographic physician maldistribution

problem in the province and have initiated a number of programs to address the issue, some of which I'll quickly refer to.

He goes on to say that the physician supply has remained remarkably stable over the seven-year time period of this study. His study is from 1991 to 1998. He further says that many models of physician growth developed by non-physician academics predict that physician supply will keep pace with the rate of population growth and aging, and that even with the 10% reduction of medical school enrolment there will be an accumulating surplus of physicians by the year 2010.

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There are other studies that also indicate that right now we've got enough physicians in the province of Ontario. The problem is with the distribution. In many areas of the province there just aren't enough doctors. Doctors seem to continually set up practices in places where they're educated, be it in the Kingston area, Toronto, Ottawa. In fact, there's one quote I read in a recent newspaper from a doctor in my area talking about how there's such oversupply in Toronto that some doctors actually advertise for patients. I think most people around the province would consider this remarkable.

I come from an area, Niagara, which suffers from one of the biggest problems of poor distribution. We have one doctor for every 1,526 people, and that's one GP. That doesn't include specialists; that's one general practitioner. Kingston has 1 to 732; it's the best in the province and this is general practitioners. Ottawa is 1 to 859. Toronto is 1 to 871.

Specialists, of course, locate in many of these areas where there are teaching facilities and there's a problem of specialist distribution across the province. Interestingly enough, Niagara isn't as poorly off on specialists as they are on GPs.

The other problem that we have in Niagara is that we have the oldest practising doctors in Ontario. The age profile that we have is the oldest. So the problem is going to get worse and worse unless we do something.

There's several initiatives that the government had undertaken, many in co-operation with doctors. Incentive grants: They've been around for quite a while, ranging up to \$40,000 over a period of time to get them to go to underserved communities. There's recently \$30 million to help 27 small rural hospitals retain doctors; a \$70-an-hour sessional fee for doctors; a physician job registry. The Ministry of Health is hosting health professionals recruitment tours. We're discounting fees for doctors

who go to overserviced areas to try to get them out of those areas. We have brought in nurse case practitioners where they can work in conjunction with doctors to try to solve this problem and look at some of the less serious cases in their office.

It seems that back in 1996 this legislature passed Bill 26, the Savings and Restructuring Act, and in that bill we had a section which would allow us to manage billing numbers. What this basically would do, in its simplest form, is that when new doctors come into the province or new graduates get ready to practise—right now they can get a billing number and they can begin to practise anywhere they want to in the province of Ontario. The trend is still that they continually locate in these overserviced areas and don't go to the under-serviced areas. What managing of billing numbers would simply do is say, "Look, we no longer need physicians in the following centres: Toronto, Ottawa and a few others. If you want to practise anywhere else in the province of Ontario, we need physicians. You can go anywhere but Toronto. You can go anywhere but perhaps Ottawa." Even if billing number restrictions are done maybe for a certain period of time so that people can go to other communities, even if they are surrounding communities of the Toronto or Ottawa area, nearby communities, they can get out and into those communities, as we're trying to do with medical training programs, get them out into communities to try to get new doctors to see what it's like to live in a community outside of a major urban centre. Hopefully they'll like that and then we'll retain there.

Even if managed billing numbers are done for a three-year or five-year period, it will hopefully increase the exposure as we're trying to do the medical training right now and let these doctors want to practise in some of these areas.

I met yesterday with the folks from PAIRO, the inter-nists of Ontario—very convincing arguments. They were concerned about billing numbers. They talked to me about several studies. They gave me quite a bit of literature and, to their credit, I think PAIRO is working very hard to try to find solutions to this problem. I think they deserve to be heard even more by the Ministry of Health of this province and by the OMA and I encourage that to continue.

One of the things that the folks that I talked to yesterday was a study by Morris Barer and Greg Stoddart. These folks did a study on improving access to needed medical services in rural or remote Canadian communities. They did a study in 1991 and they've redone this in 1999.

They say the worst thing we can do is nothing. They talk about a lot of different solutions that have been tried, including increasing medical school enrolment. What do they say about that? It won't work. Why? Because we have enough physicians, as I have already said, and with the increase in enrolment they'll likely continue the pattern of locating in urban centres.

They talk about financial incentives. They point out that financial incentives already exist. While they say financial incentives should not be dismissed, as a general strategy they have clearly not solved the problem. We have had this problem in other jurisdictions for many years, and they have not worked.

Recruitment of foreign doctors: We can recruit foreign doctors. We can open our doors and have more foreign doctors come in. But if they all just locate in the major centres, it won't solve the distribution problem.

They went on to consider many issues. They talked about a need for increased emphasis on educational initiatives, which I support. But I think that can be done in conjunction with managed billing numbers.

They did talk about the solution I am talking about today; that is, billing number allocations, managed billing numbers. What did they say? They said that a number of provinces have had or currently have these policies. Because these schemes have run into legal turbulence, none has ever been in place for a sufficient period to assess its effectiveness. Experience elsewhere suggests the administrative regulatory approaches can be effective in improving physician distribution.

Although they don't come out and support this, they do say that the nationally applied billing numbers option has the potential to be the most effective solution and the least costly. There is a case for it as an appropriate management mechanism to direct publicly financed physician resources to areas of public need.

I encourage the Ministry of Health, PAIRO and the OMA to continue their discussions. I await the McKendry report to see what is proposed in it. If we cannot solve the problem through these functions, then I urge the Ministry of Health to invoke managed billing numbers in Ontario.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I will be sharing my too-limited time with the member for Prince Edward-Hastings and, I believe, the member for St Catharines and I trust that I, too, will have an extra minute added to my time this morning. I wish there were more time to discuss an issue which is of tremendous concern to anybody who comes from an area that's underserved by physicians. I wish the government would bring forward some truly constructive suggestions so that we could begin to deal with this long-standing problem.

No one denies there is a problem with distribution of physicians. However, Mr Maves's resolution would make matters worse, not better. I am very strongly opposed to it.

There are two aspects to his resolution: The first is that if the government's current initiatives fail to correct the doctor distribution problem, we should move to billing numbers. Let me make it absolutely clear that this government's so-called initiatives to deal with the doctor distribution problem will fail for two very significant reasons.

One is because this government has failed to develop a truly workable plan not only to attract physicians into

underserved areas but also to retain physicians in underserved areas. We're very successful in our home areas at attracting people. We're not as successful in keeping them there, which is what we want to do. The models this government has put in place—in their first term they promised \$36.4 million over three years, almost none of which was used because the model that was developed couldn't possibly work.

It's not because there aren't models available. The Professional Association of Interns and Residents of Ontario has been working on this for six years and has put forward model after model, comprehensive plans to deal with both recruitment and retention. The government takes bits and pieces and doesn't even follow through on those, let alone put in place a comprehensive plan.

Proposals have come from northwestern Ontario, northeastern Ontario and southwestern Ontario. The important thing is that these proposals are not exactly the same. What the government fails to understand is that you have to deal with the needs of each community and each region a bit differently.

One of the communities I represent is the tiny town of Atikokan. They are facing a significant physician shortage. One of the reasons the government's group plan model won't work for them is that it's based on a minimum number of physicians. A minimum number of physicians in a small town like Atikokan isn't enough to give any family physician a reasonable quality of life. So the plan won't work and they have trouble attracting and retaining physicians in Atikokan. The primary need in Thunder Bay and other underserved communities is not the same plan we need in Atikokan. Until the government understands the importance of tailoring its plans to different areas, it's not going to be successful in dealing with the problem of doctor distribution.

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The second reason the plans of this government will fail is because they refuse to recognize that it's no longer just a distribution problem but a supply problem, and the supply problem, the shortage of physicians in this province, must be dealt with. It's time for the McKendry report to be tabled so we can get on with looking at how we solve the problems of shortage. As long as there is a shortage, the acute problems of distribution which communities in this province have been facing for many years is going to get even more critical.

We have put forward a number of suggestions for dealing with the shortage problem, including increased medical spaces and an increased number of residencies for foreign-trained physicians, both of which the government could act on tomorrow if it had the will.

One thing that we know for sure will not work is the other part of Mr Maves's resolution, where he talks about instituting a form of billing numbers. I can tell you, as somebody who comes from an underserved community, that we do not want physicians coming into our community who are coerced into being there and who are only going to be there for as long as it takes to fulfill any

commitment they have made. We want people to come to our communities because they are attracted to practise medicine there and because the support they get is sufficient to allow them to have a quality of life practising medicine in our communities.

We have already seen the impact of a limited billing number with the restriction on the amounts physicians can bill in overserved areas. The same Dr Chan, whom Mr Maves was quoting earlier, has made it quite clear in his report that the effect of that restricted billing approach was not to solve the problem of distribution. In fact, it made it worse because it simply drove physicians out of this province. He's hopeful that by ending the restrictive billing number we might be able to retain young physicians in our province, and that would certainly help both supply and distribution.

I urge this member, and I urge this government, to start to listen to the voices of people who have been dealing with the underserved issue for years: the Northwestern Ontario Associated Chambers of Commerce, who are strongly opposed to this resolution; the Northeastern Ontario Medical Education Corp, which is strongly opposed to this resolution; the Chatham-Kent Health Alliance, which is strongly opposed to this resolution; and the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities, which is strongly opposed to this resolution.

Listen to the people who know what's needed when they say: "Do things that are positive. Do things like increasing the training, that's done in northern and southwestern Ontario, the most successful program to date in dealing with the distribution problem."

I trust this government will set aside this tired duck, which by the way has been found to be unconstitutional in other provinces. It will not fly. It should not fly. This government should be putting its energies into developing programs to deal with physician shortages and distribution problems that will actually work over the long term.

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): It is my pleasure and honour today to rise in support of my colleague and friend Bart Maves, the member for Niagara Falls.

The member has initiated this resolution on a most pressing and important point. A family doctor is not just a number. My family has had a family doctor. When I get calls at my office—because Cambridge is underserved, like Niagara Falls, Oshawa, Barrie and many smaller communities in southern Ontario and northern communities—especially with children: How does one tell a constituent who phones with a sick child that she cannot obtain a family doctor in her vicinity? It's most difficult, and I have had a problem with it.

It's strange that one can live in a municipality and not really know it. I did not realize the extreme shortage of family doctors in our area until I was elected in June 1995. But shortly thereafter the calls started, and it troubled me. It troubled me to the extent that I took action, soon after I was elected, by applying for underserved status. It troubled me to the extent that I formed a task force in my municipality. It troubled me to the

extent that I started an initiative on a private bill to do away with the unequal distribution of family practitioners in our province.

I should say that in all my efforts, my good friend Bart Maves, the member for Niagara Falls, assisted and supported me throughout. Therefore, it is my pleasure at this time to speak to the public about this grave and serious problem for families not only in my riding but in many areas of the province.

Our government has proposed free tuition, and on July 23 Minister Witmer took one step closer to a possible solution by the appointment of Dr Robert McKendry, a fact-finding commissioner. I have faith in Minister Witmer's efforts and anxiously await her report and her plan.

The strange part about this problem is that everyone is in agreement that it is a severe problem, that we should do something about it, but there is not the will among all the stakeholders at this stage as to what we should do. Mr Maves has put forward a resolution which is strict but I think necessary. It is necessary to protect not only his constituents, the young families with children, but constituents throughout this province.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): This is certainly a topic that I have a strong interest in. We have a profound shortage of doctors in our area, and I wish it, like so many other things in life, could be solved with a very simple solution. But life doesn't work that way. In fact, the entire concept is kind of intriguing.

If we can say to doctors, "You must live here, and you must practise there," we can extend it to other things. I think perhaps in a way I saw a model of that with the legislation that said to squeegee people they can't be on the streets. We've now moved them somewhere, and perhaps we could take the homeless and the people who don't have the finances for food and say, "If you want to use the food bank, then you've got to live in this part of Ontario." So we could clean up the streets of Toronto by simply hiding the problem.

I certainly don't believe the simple solution of just forcing people out of an area and into another is the answer to it. There have been a lot of people who have put a lot of energy into this and have still not found the ideal solution. I would suggest that if we order someone to practise in a certain area, they still have the option of practising in the US, they have the option of practising in another province, and this resolution would worsen rather than help the situation. It doesn't reflect the fact that our physicians are humans and they have family situations. They may have parents that it's necessary to be close to. Their spouse or their partner may have a situation that requires them to be in a certain area. This is a very heavy-handed approach to a very complex problem.

The problem we're going to face is shortages. I'm a baby boomer. I know that my generation will be retiring. I know significant numbers of doctors in my age group who will be retiring. Unfortunately, at the same time as large numbers of doctors are retiring, we're seeing a need for increased medical services because of the aging popu-

lation. We need to address the doctor shortage. We don't need to simply try to artificially shuffle people around the province. We need to address the doctor shortage. There are approaches that I believe can be taken.

I was at a meeting of our public health board last week and was intrigued by their concept of prevention: The number of hours of medical care that are required each year for people who fall, if we could reduce those falls, if we could reduce those injuries by 20%, the tremendous reduction in medical care by doctors that would result from that. Money into prevention is, in fact, money into solving the physician shortage.

Nurse practitioners: We've paid lip service to them in this province, and we have as a province put money into their training, but we really don't want to pay them. There are so many services that could be provided in remote communities or there are services that could be provided in a doctor's office that could be delivered by these people if they could be funded for the service. Ironically, they require consultation with doctors, and this government is not prepared to pay the doctors for the time that they spend consulting with the nurse practitioners. There's a resource that needs to be used more.

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I believe savings could be accrued in physicians attracted if we went more to a one-stop approach. If we could have doctors and nurse practitioners and nurses and perhaps dentists and other health care providers in a cluster, it would certainly lessen the tremendous workload on doctors to cover after hours and to cover weekends. I believe there's opportunity there to attract doctors to an area, not with a big stick but with good working conditions.

Many young doctors, if not all, when they leave university have substantial financial debts. I think we could provide incentives, again, to attract them to an area rather than force them to an area. They're coming out with tremendous debts and at the same time they're being required to spend a lot of upfront dollars to set up an office, which consists of a loan on top of a loan, to get operating. This government could work with them to attract them into an area by helping them get started up.

In rural communities, we also face the problem of travel time, and I believe we could provide some incentive to doctors to serve more than one area by paying them not just the travel costs but their time.

I believe there are solutions that are attainable, but I don't believe this big stick is a solution.

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I'd like to begin by thanking the member for Niagara Falls for bringing this resolution for debate to the House today. I know for many members this is an important issue in their ridings, as many areas do not have enough doctors.

As a representative for the riding of Perth-Middlesex, I've spent a great deal of time, over the past four years particularly, trying to improve the health services available to my constituents. All too often in the past governments have avoided the issues surrounding health care in

small communities in Ontario. It is the small communities in Ontario that have suffered.

In my riding of Perth-Middlesex there is a desperate shortage of doctors, especially in the western part of the riding near Mitchell. I can remember at one point there were six doctors in this town. The number of doctors went to an alarming two before climbing to where it is today at four.

I know this fluctuation in medical practitioners is not uncommon in small communities throughout Ontario. As a government, we're committed to all communities having access to the medical care they need.

At present, there are close to 70 communities in Ontario that lack basic physician services. We've been listening to the Ontario Hospital Association, the Ontario Medical Association and the association representing interns and residents, and we have acted on their recommendations to remedy the situation, but it is a complex problem.

The people of Perth-Middlesex see the need for effective and efficient health care services that are available when they need them. They know that I'll fight for those needs, and they know that I'll support the government initiatives such as the 70-hour sessional fee, the discounted payment policy, the re-entry training program, the globally funded contracts. There's more that needs to be done, and I think Mr Maves is on the right track with this resolution.

The health care needs of the people in the rural areas of the province are not the same as the needs of those in urban areas. The initiatives introduced by this government which I have just mentioned are the first steps toward addressing the difficulties faced in underserved communities.

As well, during the election we made a promise that, subject to community needs, our government will offer free tuition to students entering medical school or already studying medicine. If they're willing to relocate and practise in underserved areas on graduation, they have to commit to stay in that community for a minimum of five years. This should help, but it won't solve the whole problem.

I don't think it's unlike a situation where an engineer graduates from school and he goes to GM and GM says, "Yes, we absolutely need you, but we don't need you here in Oshawa, we want you in St Catharines," or Sainte Thérèse or at one of our plants somewhere else. In order to gain that employment, they go where their employer needs them. So I'm not averse to suggesting to our doctors that they should go where the need is.

I am ever so glad to see everyone in the House this morning, particularly Mr Bradley from the great riding of St Catharines, because he has been bringing to the attention of this House the shortage of ophthalmologists in the Niagara region. I would suggest there is not only a shortage of specialists, but of family doctors as well. We don't need an ophthalmologist in every store on every street in every town in Ontario, but we desperately need those medical services, both specialists and general, when we

need them. That is why I am proud to stand in the House this morning and support this resolution by the member for Niagara Falls.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I am certainly pleased to join the debate with respect to the resolution from the member. We have to look at this situation as a very serious matter, and I think that's why the member who has brought this forward is on the right track. This is a very serious matter. The objective here is to get communities the physicians they need and deserve.

The ministry, as we know, has an underserved-area program. The issue that is being raised by this resolution is: "If the government's current initiatives fail to correct the doctor distribution problem throughout Ontario, then the government should proclaim sections of the Savings and Restructuring Act, 1996, allowing it to attach geographic areas to all new billing numbers issued by the Ministry of Health."

I only can relate it to the situation in my riding. I'm the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford. I want to refer to an article that was in the Barrie Examiner this week. I'll read certain sections from it. It's entitled "Patients Face Long Waits at Hospital's Emergency Ward."

"And, as more and more people move into this burgeoning area bringing with them their growing health care needs, busy days are becoming the norm at RVH, which already has one of the busiest emergency departments in the province....

"Adding to the pressure on RVH's emergency department is a severe shortage of family doctors in the Barrie area. The doctor crunch means many people without family physicians are relying on the emergency department and the city's after-hour clinics for non-urgent medical care.

"We see a large number of people who don't have family doctors.... It's very difficult for patients. We have people moving into the area to find, not only do they not have a choice in terms of location or gender, they may not have the opportunity to get a doctor, period.

"So, many end up in emergency and after-hour clinics."

"At the moment, none of Barrie's approximately 70 family doctors is accepting new patients. Counting specialists, the city has about 200 doctors at present....

"Provincial health care statistics show Barrie has 1,259 patients for every non-specialist. That compares to a ratio of 824 to 1 in Toronto.

"Unlike the situation in Toronto, where an outbreak of flu virus has been straining hospital emergency departments, Barrie can't blame the flu for a spike in emergency visits.

"It's purely volume—the impact of population growth—that's pushing up the numbers.... Patient volume is up 10% in every department in the hospital."

I think it's high time that we address this very serious matter. I certainly join the member with respect to this resolution. I think we have to get communities the physicians they need and deserve. I look forward to the vote on this matter.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Indeed, one of the very significant health care problems that we face in St Catharines and in the Niagara Peninsula is that of a shortage of family physicians. What we have to recognize, as well, are some other special circumstances, and that is, by and large, that the physicians who are in Niagara are older in age than the physicians in many areas of the province. Therefore, we can anticipate that there will be some significant numbers of individuals retiring from the medical profession in the relatively near future. This problem has been brewing for some period of time, and those of us who have constituency offices—that is, all members of this Legislature—recognize that there are people phoning in desperation, trying to secure the services of a family physician.

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We've had physicians who have passed away, that is, practising physicians, and those who have simply retired or moved elsewhere. The problem that we are encountering is that we're not having a sufficient number of physicians coming in to replace those. Certainly the Niagara District Health Council and individual communities, along with the Ontario government, have endeavoured to deal with this problem, but at this point I think it's close to 100 physicians who are really needed for the entire Niagara Peninsula.

I can tell you as well that there's a problem with specialists. I have raised in this House on a number of occasions the problem we have with ophthalmologists. Again because our area of the province has, on a per capita basis, the largest number of people who are senior citizens, we therefore have people who are bound to encounter the health care system more. Some of the parts of our body that deteriorate as we get older are the eyes, the ears and others, but certainly the eyes, and we have a situation where we have a shortage of ophthalmologists. We're supposed to have, even under the rules of the provincial government's Ministry of Health, 14 ophthalmologists. We have only 13 at this time, and a number of those may be people who are not practising on a full-time basis. The provincial government's answer to this was simply to lump us in with Hamilton. Hamilton has 20 ophthalmologists. I'm informed by people who represent Hamilton that not all of those people are practising on a full-time basis and indeed their offices are backed up. So if you want an appointment with an ophthalmologist in our part of the province, it's going to be at least two months, probably four or six months, if we're not talking about an emergency.

Clearly, we have a problem that can be solved at this time only by lifting the billing cap for ophthalmologists in our part of the province. Is it necessarily the ideal solution? Well, there aren't many ideal solutions in this world. An ideal solution would be to have more ophthalmologists. We don't; we're an underserved area.

Similarly, with family physicians—and indeed I could say a few other areas where we have specialists—we have the same situation. Again, with the large number of seniors, we have people who need knee replacements, hip

replacements and other work done to their body, which happens when all of us tend to get older. Billing caps there force those individuals into unacceptably long waiting times.

The member has come up with one suggestion on how this may be fixed. I believe there should be a lot of incentives out there for individuals to come to areas such as Niagara. I would like to see more of the actual teaching and training taking place in areas such as the Niagara Peninsula. The city of St Catharines, if I can be parochial, would be a reasonable place for that.

Raising this issue in the House is a good idea. It has to be addressed, and those of us who represent medically underserved areas are going to be concerned that we have a program which attracts physicians of all kinds to our area. I think it's going to require an investment of money. If the government is going to be busy cutting taxes and cutting various ministries, it's not going to have the money to deal with a health care crisis in this province. What the people in my area want to see is their funds, their tax dollars, invested in a top-notch health care system.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): It's my pleasure to be able to speak to this resolution this morning. Let me first of all say that I agree with the member for St Catharines and others that this is an important issue to have before the House today. It is, as we all know, a long-standing problem in many of our communities across Ontario. I recognize that members of all parties over various times have tried to deal with this very vexing problem.

I'm an MPP in Toronto, and it's not a problem there. Indeed, as people know, one of the problems is that many physicians choose to stay in Toronto and other large urban areas. So I certainly don't speak from experience myself or my constituents'. I must say that my birthplace—my hometown is in Newfoundland-Labrador, from where I just returned, in fact, because my father is ill. I can tell you, as you can well imagine, that it continues to be a major problem, as here in Ontario, particularly in Labrador and rural Labrador—of course it's all rural in Labrador—to attract not only physicians but nurses. In fact there was a press conference when I was there held by the nurses, talking about this very same issue: what kinds of incentives to bring forward to keep nurses and doctors in very remote areas, as in Labrador and parts of Newfoundland. Of course, having been a member of the NDP government, I remember very well sitting around the cabinet table trying to grapple with this indeed very disturbing and difficult problem.

I'm not going to support the bill today, and I don't think anybody should.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): The resolution.

Ms Churley: The resolution. Thank you for clarifying that, member for Dufferin-Peel. I'm not going to support the resolution before us today because it is indeed a really draconian measure and, as has been pointed out by previous speakers, has already been ruled unconstitu-

tional in other provinces where it has been tried. It is a measure that perhaps one day as a last resort, after trying all kinds of solutions that have been suggested and which so far this government, as indicated in many letters that my colleague, our health critic, Ms Frances Lankin, has received since the medical community became aware that this resolution was going to be debated today—they point out that they have indeed tried to get the minister to adopt some of the measures they're recommending and can't get her to do that.

I want to read you some examples from the letters that we have received and that I know Mr Maves has received as well from many groups and associations from the medical community in Ontario. As you will see from some of the excerpts I read from these letters, there is a real concern out there about this draconian measure that's been brought before us today.

I'm going to read to you, for instance, some excerpts from a letter from Dr Jeffrey Remington, which was copied to me and Frances Lankin. It was written directly to Mr Maves in response to this bill. He is the chair of the Niagara Physician Resource Planning Task Force. What he says is this:

"Dear Mr Maves:

"I am writing to you to with strong disapproval for your plan to begin attaching geographic billing number restrictions to new medical graduates. As you are aware, I am the chair of the Niagara Physician Resource Planning Task Force, a committee of the Niagara District Health Council. For almost two years, this group has extensively researched both the crisis in physician manpower, as well as potential solutions. I know first-hand the lack of primary care doctors in your riding, as well as the entire Niagara Peninsula.

"Our group has offered several solutions to the doctor shortage that could be effectively and promptly implemented both in our region and in other areas of the province. They include:

"—the hiring of additional community development officers for central, south and west planning regions

"—funding for medical students and residents to complete parts of their training in our region

"—pre-medical programs to encourage students from outside of the tertiary centres to enter medical training with the goal that they would be more likely to return there to practise (eg, medical experience plus program at Brock University)."

And this is something that our party indeed has been pushing, that is:

"—additional funding for nurse practitioners to work in group practices in rural and underserved communities."

Let me add there that when we were in government, we, as everybody knows, enhanced and started a funding program to increase the number of nurse practitioners and their responsibilities and abilities to carry out certain practices. We know that there are nurse practitioners—there are some in my riding—who cannot get jobs, which is a real shame. It's been recommended time and time

again that there be more community health centres in rural areas and the role of nurse practitioners be increased greatly.

He also recommends:

"—increasing the enrolment of Ontario's medical schools combined with specific changes in family medicine resident training programs to increase the proportion of family doctors graduating and to ensure they have the training and skills to meet the challenges of practice in non-urban centres."

His last recommendation here is:

"—address the issue of foreign-trained medical graduates, many of whom are native Ontarians, and facilitate some sort of training/certification programs for them."

1050

He goes on to say, "Unfortunately, when we have attempted these ideas with Ministry of Health officials they have not been met with approval.

"We strongly agreed with the Minister of Health's decision to appoint a fact-finder on this issue." May I point out that this government's own health minister has appointed a fact-finder on this issue and these people have participated in what he says was a very successful three-hour meeting.

"It is most discouraging and detrimental to this process"—that is ongoing right now; those are my words—"that you chose not to wait for his report, but to immediately jump to extremely coercive measures to solve this problem.

"Mr Maves, you are no doubt aware that one of the strongest reasons that your riding is underserved for physicians is that in the last decade a great number chose to move to the United States. ... If you and your government choose to implement coercive measures to redistribute family physicians around this province, I absolutely believe that we will be faced with the largest 'brain drain' of young medical talent the province has ever seen."

What Dr Remington is suggesting here—he's urging the health minister and the cabinet to withdraw this idea immediately. Now, I recognize that this is a private member's bill and it is up to each individual member to vote on this today, but I would agree with Dr Remington. This bill should be voted down today. There are all kinds of other measures that have been suggested in the letter I just read and I have many more communiqués from various others from the medical field who express the same kinds of concerns I expressed today.

There is a letter here, for instance—I believe all MPPs received it—from the Professional Association of Internes and Residents of Ontario. They say they're writing to ask our party, and indeed I'm sure all of the other MPPs, to reject this resolution on the following grounds:

"(1) PAIRO has worked for the past six years with close to 200 northern and rural communities and virtually all these communities have told us that they 'prefer to have doctors who want to come and stay over doctors who are forced to come.'"

His second point: Again we hear that another group “has recommended a broad range of non-coercive solutions to the Ministry of Health,” and “these recommendations are included in several reports” which are available to all of us. He says, “While a few of these recommendations have been put in place, primarily in northern Ontario, many more significant measures recommended ... have not been implemented. (Some of the possible solutions identified include increasing the number of students admitted to medical school, increasing the number of international medical graduates admitted to the IMGs training system, voluntary return of service with financial incentives such as loan repayment, training more physicians in rural areas and substantially expanding training programs in rural areas, extending and implementing alternate payment plans so doctors can work on contract rather than on fee for service, setting up a regionalized quick response system for replacement doctors (locums), providing quality of life incentives to avoid physician burnout, recognition of spousal and family needs, implementing funded group clinic facilities, and restructuring of the underserved area program.

“(3) The McKendry report (on physician shortages)”—and let me bring this up again—“commissioned by the Ministry of Health, is due shortly. This report and the recommendations it will propose must be given sufficient time for implementation before contemplating the sort of resolution proposed by Mr Maves. In the meantime, PAIRO continues to work with underserved and rural communities to help alleviate shortages in the short term.”

He goes on to say the same thing as other correspondents have said, that this is a draconian measure and will in fact have the opposite effect. I know that Mr Maves is bringing this resolution forward in good faith, but when you get this kind of information from those in the medical community, who say, “This will not work; it will have the opposite effect, that in fact we will lose more physicians,” just think about it.

We know there are more and more women entering the medical profession. There are more female doctors out there, who have children, who have spouses, who have family needs. We have situations and legal decisions that back up what I’m saying here. When you have a couple with children living in one area and that person is restricted from practising that profession, then it means it’s a fundamental affront to their human rights, their constitutional rights, that they would not be able to get work or their spouse—and this applies whether it’s male or female—would have to pick up and leave or not be able to work in that community.

So we have two reasons why we shouldn’t support this resolution today. Number one, in many ways the most compelling, is that this government right now has a fact-finding commission out there which is going to make recommendations to the minister shortly. Why in the world would this resolution be brought forward today when that report is imminent? We don’t know as yet how the minister is going to respond to it, but what we should

hope for is that they will move really aggressively, which indeed may mean spending extra funds. The worry we have here today, of course, with even more cuts coming, which we all know about, is that in fact there is going to be less money to be able to deal with the kinds of incentives and measures that are recommended by those who are in the field and know what needs to be done and know that there are solutions to this. I fear that the government may reject some of these solutions, but at least wait until we try all of those other measures before we get into a mess, that—and this is the second reason we should reject it today—it has already proved to be unconstitutional in other provinces.

Here we have a government that’s in the process of having recommendations from the medical community to be delivered to them, and secondly, we know—the evidence is in front of us; I have copies of some of the court decisions here—that it has already proven to be unconstitutional. Why waste the time of the Legislature debating something and perhaps passing something that indeed, at the end of day, if it is implemented by this government, will mean (1) that it’s draconian, (2) will not work for the various reasons I’ve outlined, and (3) should the government still choose to go ahead with this, we clearly know that it is already unconstitutional and will just lead to expensive, messy court challenges. I will not be supporting this today.

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I am pleased to rise today to support the resolution put forward by the member for Niagara Falls with respect to our distribution problem of physicians in Ontario.

When I was first elected, I worked on this issue with the towns of Tilsonburg and Port Rowan, and very simply, there were just too many people for the number of doctors in those areas. We were successful in getting Port Rowan designated as an underserved area very early on. Subsequently, all the other municipalities across Haldimand-Norfolk have been designated. However, the designation does not seem to be a magic bullet and it does not guarantee a new doctor anywhere in Ontario.

The member for Niagara Falls presented some statistics. In 1997, the University of Toronto did a report on physician distribution. Clearly, the results are a wake-up call. Their findings indicate that almost 90% of the inhabitants of underserved areas are in southern Ontario. This U of T report hit home in my riding. The Haldimand-Norfolk region was deemed the second most underserved area in Ontario, behind only the Sudbury district. Local people did not need a study to tell them there weren’t enough doctors in their area. The problem has become quite apparent in the town of Simcoe in the past year. In consultation with the Ministry of Health, I requested that caps be lifted on physicians’ remuneration as a short-term measure.

1100

However, throwing money at the problem does not solve the problem and we need a long-term solution, the kind of solution we are seeing here today from the member for Niagara Falls. I’ve been very encouraged by a

number of pilot projects, for example in Paris, Hamilton and other areas, to roster doctors in co-operative groups to take care of patients. This is one very creative approach to the solution. But the heart of the problem that the member for Niagara Falls is trying to remedy with today's resolution is that the doctor distribution system and problem needs to be addressed very soon.

Our government has been working with the Ontario Medical Association for over four years to solve this problem. We have to ask ourselves: How much closer are we to solving the problem now? I have confidence in the Blueprint plan to offer free tuition to medical students. Again, that's going to help a bit in remote areas like Kapuskasing and Port Rowan, as I have mentioned.

Our member, in the resolution today, has suggested that all other avenues are failing. We should stop giving new OHIP billing numbers to overserviced areas. Some may think this is drastic, but the member—and I agree with him—believes that we need a plan B because plan A is not working.

Mr Maves: I want to thank all my colleagues in the Legislature for their input on this debate. It's a complex problem. I know that, and we've been trying to solve this in Ontario for many, many years. In 1996 we had this debate when we passed Bill 26. The OMA, PAIRO and others said: "Don't enact it. We'll work with you to solve the distribution problems." Four years later, the problem is worse—not necessarily for lack of effort, but the problem is worse and our constituents are still having this problem to greater and greater degrees.

Again, it's not a problem of supply. I talked about Ben Chan's study, which said it's not a problem of supply. The OMA has recognized it; the Ministry of Health has recognized it. Again, the report that was given to me by Barer-Stoddart recognizes it. They say:

"History does not support a supply expansion policy. For over 30 years, prior to the early 1990s, annual increases in the supply of physicians exceeded growth in the Canadian population. Since then, it has kept pace.... Therefore, it is discouraging that the problem of rural and remote access ... appears to be worse now than ever before."

We concur, and I think the citizens of Ontario concur. Today's debate shows that we indeed needed to renew this discussion. Barer-Stoddart also says, "Our intent is to stimulate discussion and further considerations, because it seems clear that real progress will require real change."

Folks, I support increased remote medical training initiatives. I support the use of nurse case practitioners. I support improvement initiatives. I support seeing the McKendry study. That was in my resolution before the desk edited it out, quite frankly. But we need to get something done and we need to get something soon. I hope you will support the resolution.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): The member's time has expired. This ballot item will be dealt with at 12 o'clock.

HIGHWAY 17

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Harris government should keep its electoral promise to the people of Renfrew county to improve the safety of Highway 17 by immediately four-laning Highway 17 to the town of Arnprior and by immediately committing to a timetable for the four-laning of Highway 17 to the town of Renfrew.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): The member has moved ballot item number 4.

Mr Conway: I rise today to address a matter of urgent public concern to the people I represent in rural eastern Ontario, the Ottawa Valley. I do so recognizing that I'm not alone in this concern. I'm pleased to see my colleague the newly elected member from Carleton-Gloucester here today, someone who knows the Ottawa Valley well and who asked a related question to the Minister of Transportation the other day.

To give you some indication of how serious this matter is for my constituents, almost the very moment that my friend and colleague from Carleton-Gloucester was asking the Minister of Transportation his question about Highway 17 in this Legislature but 48 hours ago, the 22nd person was being killed on that highway in the last 12 months.

Highway 17 through the Ottawa Valley is, tragically, a killing field for my constituents, and for other people who must of necessity, for work or recreation, travel that very important artery through the Ottawa Valley.

Let me repeat to this House: 22 people have been killed on Highway 17 in the Ottawa Valley in the last 12 months. That is a carnage that is absolutely unacceptable. It is a carnage that is deeply troubling to the people I represent and, I know, to the people who are represented by my friend from Orleans and by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. You cannot read the Pembroke paper, the Arnprior paper, the Ottawa Citizen or the Ottawa Sun without understanding the palpable anxiety and anger that attaches to the fact that after years and decades of promises from provincial governments of all stripes, we still see a highway, particularly between Kanata and Arnprior, that is not four-laned.

Yes, there have been improvements, and I want to congratulate whatever government, whether it was the Peterson government or the Rae government or the now Harris government for the work that's been done. It was said here the other day, appropriately, that we've just opened nine more kilometres of four-laning east of Arnprior. But that's well short of the timetable that was promised years ago.

There is more than just the carnage. There are increased volumes, particularly because of the economic activity that's developing, not just in the Ottawa Valley but in Kanata, the so-called Silicon Valley North.

More and more of the constituents I represent in communities like Renfrew and Arnprior are driving daily into Kanata and West Carleton to work. People from the

Upper Ottawa Valley, and places like Barry's Bay, Rolphton, Palmer Rapids and Petawawa drive routinely to the major health care facilities in the national capital area, and they do that often during very bad winter conditions. This highway is truly a matter of urgent public concern to everyone in eastern Ontario, most especially for my constituents.

We had an electoral campaign just a few short months ago. It is no surprise that in that electoral campaign, whether my esteemed Conservative opponent, Mr Jordan, or a very good New Democratic opponent, Mr Boyer, or I were in Arnprior or Renfrew or Pembroke or Petawawa, one of the issues that dominated the debate was: "What will you do as a potentially re-elected or elected member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke to add pressure to bring about those badly needed improvements to this highway?" All of us sang from the same hymn book, because you could not, as a democrat, do anything else. We all heard the same cries of anguish from the parents and the loved ones of those 22 people and countless others who have met either a tragic death or a serious accident on that highway.

I will not soon forget the day—it was a very rainy day—Tuesday, June 1, 1999, when I, Mr Sterling, Mr Jordan, the mayors of Renfrew and Arnprior, the warden of Renfrew county and the candidates from West Carleton gathered in the pouring rain at the intersection of 17 and old 29, just east of Arnprior, to await the arrival of the then-Minister of Transportation, now the Minister of the Environment. On the eve of polling day, Mr Clement said—and I won't quote the papers, but I could—"Re-elect us and we will move on a priority basis to get the four-lane to Arnprior and move forward with the planning to Renfrew." We all applauded.

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Two days later, the election took place. Conway was re-elected, and the Harris government was re-elected. But the people of the Ottawa Valley heard us all. They expect that the urgency and priority we all offered on that solemn, if wet, pre-election day would be met and discharged in this mandate.

Many of us are troubled that since June 3 we have our friend Mr Turnbull, the now-Minister of Transportation, writing to constituents. I'm not going to quote chapter and verse, but I have in my hand a letter signed by the Minister of Transportation to a resident of eastern Ontario who has specifically written to the minister in the past few weeks wondering what the plans were for keeping the promise on four-laning Highway 17 to Arnprior. What was the answer? The answer is—and let me quote part of the letter—"Although I am unable to commit the ministry to a specific schedule at this time...."

We need specificity. My constituents don't expect miracles, but they expect the promise to be kept, and on a timely basis. Yes, the minister said the other day to our friend from Orleans, Mr Coburn, "We will keep the promise," but there was no timetable. There was no commitment to when and where. As I say, we don't

expect miracles, but we do expect the government to recognize the urgency and the priority.

Mr Speaker, on behalf of my constituents I want to tell you that we expect more clarity, more definition to the minister's so-called commitment. Precisely when do you propose to have the four-laning to Arnprior? Precisely when do you propose to have the four-laning to the town of Renfrew?

Some people would say, "There's a resource or a money problem." I understand that. As a long-time member of this assembly and as a former minister of the crown, I understand that there are always more demands than there are dollars. But let me cite a couple of data that are highly relevant.

In eastern Ontario in the last four years, Her Majesty's provincial government, led by my colleague from Nipissing, Mr Harris, has downloaded precisely 50% of the provincial highway network in eastern Ontario. We have in eastern Ontario today a provincial highway system that is only half as large as it was only five years ago. At the same time, we have over \$2 billion worth of annual gasoline tax revenues. Let me add that, according to the Canadian Automobile Association, a very esteemed group that monitors these matters, the Ontario government is at best these days spending only 40% of the dollars collected through the gasoline tax for highway capital purposes. I understand that the government of Canada spends—

Interjection.

Mr Conway: Mr Speaker, I want some order.

I understand, as my friend from Kitchener opines, that the federal government spends even less. I ran on June 3, not for the federal Parliament; I ran to come here to give an accounting of the stewardship and of the tax dollars provided to the provincial government.

Let me repeat: In the last few years, the Ontario government has downloaded 50% of the provincial highway system in eastern Ontario. At the same time, we have continued to collect in excess of \$2 billion annually in gasoline taxes alone. According to the Canadian Automobile Association, we are committing at best only 40% of those gasoline tax revenues for highway capital and maintenance. That is not good enough and it is not fair to the rural people of the Ottawa Valley and elsewhere. If we are going to be taking more and more of gasoline taxes to fund general government programs, let me tell you, that is not only unfair to the department of transportation, to the travelling public and to the motorists of this province, but it is a cruel tax on rural people, who by and large have no public transit and must depend on the car and the half-ton truck. We should not be using the gasoline tax for general government programs.

I take my seat by concluding that this is a matter of urgent public concern, and my constituents want and expect a much clearer, much more specific timetable as to when this Highway 17 will be four-laned to Renfrew and to Arnprior.

Mr Brian Coburn (Carleton-Gloucester): I'm pleased to rise today to speak to this motion by the

member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. In particular I want to speak with respect to commitments. This government has, I believe, an enviable track record in terms of meeting its commitments. In 1995, when this government was elected, they had a plan they followed, the Common Sense Revolution. It was an action plan which they were committed to and followed through on. From 1995 to 1998, we cut taxes 69 times, including a 30% cut in income taxes. We pledged to create more jobs, and in fact a record 540,000 new jobs were created in under four years. We pledged to reduce the number of Ontarians on welfare, and as a result, Ontario has gone from the highest number of people per capita on welfare to the lowest in Canada. Back in 1995, the Mike Harris government pledged to complete Highway 416 before the end of the millennium. Not only was the highway built on time; it was also under budget.

Transportation Minister Turnbull reconfirmed the government's commitment in the House just two days ago with respect to the expansion of Highway 17 to four lanes through to Arnprior. This government has proven its ability to fulfill its commitments with the construction of Highway 416 in eastern Ontario, a highway that had been talked about for years and years. Promises were made, promises weren't kept until 1995. Now, a promise made is a promise kept.

We've also introduced the action plan for safer roads. In fact, before the Mike Harris government was elected it was estimated with respect to Highway 416, the 80-kilometre stretch, that it would take 10 years to complete. Instead the highway was completed before the year 2000 and under budget by \$14 million. It was unveiled to the people of Ontario in September of this year in a lasting tribute to the veterans, as it was named the Veterans Memorial Highway.

In order to truly appreciate the commitments kept by this government, it's important to recognize the following facts: This year alone, the federal government will remove in excess of \$2 billion in gasoline taxes from Ontario. Last year, they removed \$2 billion in gasoline taxes from this province and reinvested a paltry \$20 million. Last year, 1998-99, this government spent \$151 million on capital construction and rehabilitation of eastern Ontario highways. The most the provincial Liberals spent was \$43 million, in 1989-90. This year, 1999-2000, it is the highest capital construction and rehabilitation budget in Ontario's history, almost \$700 million invested in construction and rehabilitation of Ontario's highways, which had been left in a state of neglect during the latter 1980s and early 1990s—twice what the Liberals spent, \$342 million, in 1989-90.

But simply widening Highway 417 will not guarantee increased highway safety, and for that reason Minister Turnbull outlined a comprehensive action plan with respect to safer roads in Ontario. Some of the highlights of this action plan are increased enforcement by the Ontario Provincial Police and Ministry of Transportation, in which police will crack down on aggressive driving and rigorously enforce speed limits and other highway

traffic legislation; in addition to that, the promotion of safer driving habits through public education, an intensive and long-term public education campaign designed to cut down on aggressive driving, speeding, following too closely, improper lane changes, and of course road rage.

We've also established an Ontario Advisory Group on Safe Driving. This incorporates input from a wide range of key stakeholder groups across the province who are interested in road use and highway safety. This group will meet regularly to advise the Minister of Transportation on better and safer driving habits and how to improve the rules of the road, and the minister will rely on them as a valuable resource and respected sounding board on which to implement new policies that will provide safer roads for Ontarians.

1120

We mustn't overlook the fact of long-term infrastructure planning as well, to ensure that future development will meet rigorous safety and traffic requirements. To ensure that Ontario's transportation infrastructure and capital investment decisions continue to be based on solid research and knowledge, this long-term strategic plan will focus on such key transportation issues as road safety, free flow of goods and services on our highway system, and enhanced gateways and trade corridors that we need to keep Ontario's economy strong.

I'd like to point out and commend a volunteer group in Arnprior known as the Safe on 17 group. The spokesperson for that group, Mr Sean Allen, also recognized the importance of improving driver education and safe operating practices on our highways and recognized that driver error does play a large part in some of the collisions that we have on our highways.

I don't think anyone in this House would not support an initiative to improve safety on our highways. When a person loses their life on our highways, it is indeed a sad and tragic situation, on any one of our highways, including the stretch up the Ottawa Valley. That's why this action plan will play an important role in how we build and construct our highways and change our rules on how vehicles should operate on those public highways in the future.

In conclusion, this government does honour its commitments. It was a priority of this government to finish Highway 416 on time and under budget: job done ahead of time; check it off. It is a priority of this government to ensure all Ontarians have safer roads to use throughout the province: The action plan and advisory group is another commitment kept. It is the priority of this government to widen Highway 17 to four lanes to Arnprior and initiate the process for extension to Renfrew, and with a great deal of confidence, I say this will be another commitment kept by this government.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I stand here in my place to fully support the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. He understands that in rural Ontario and in northern Ontario highways are our lifeline. In Algoma-Manitoulin, the air service that we

once could count on exists no more in many of our communities.

Highway 17: Sometimes I think that maybe I am the member for Highway 17 rather than the member for Algoma-Manitoulin. Roughly 500 miles of Highway 17 is within the constituency of Algoma-Manitoulin, from Nairn Centre to the Hemlo gold fields. It is huge. It is one of the lifelines that we find most important. It would be inconceivable to not have highway improvements on 17 done today. I look in the constituency, and while we have had some rehabilitation work done on the highway, we are still experiencing huge stretches of 17 that need dramatic work.

I want to tell you that I, like the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, know that there's \$2 billion of government revenue that is not being spent on our highways. That is a strange state of affairs. Merely nine years ago, almost exactly the same amount of money that was brought in from fuel taxes, licence fees etc were spent on our roads—just nine years ago. What's happened? What has happened is that two successive governments have decided that this is a great source of revenue, that people won't notice. The people don't seem to understand that we're not using it for roads any more. It used to be called the road tax. When you went to your local service station and he submitted the tax claims to the province, it was called road tax. We no longer, apparently, call it a road tax because it doesn't go to the roads, or at least a very small proportion, about 40% of it, I guess.

We have the money in this province to invest in our infrastructure. In our area, we have to have it. I've noticed that, as governments do, they announce lots of highway projects just prior to elections. We expected, on the word of the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, that we would have Highway 6 from Espanola to Little Current done. I don't see much action. Maybe in the fullness of time, as they say. And there are other significant road improvements that need to be made, but no, Mr Eves and Mr Harris are using that \$2 billion to finance some of their follies.

I want to tell the Minister of Transportation that this afternoon, when Minister Hodgson releases his savings, his \$1 billion in cuts that he's going to take out, we are going to have a very close look at his capital budget, because we believe there will be less money spent on roads. We believe that the capital expenditures that this government had pledged will not take place, at least not within the time frame of the next year or two. We will probably see a group of announcements in about 2003 and an increase in capital spending about that time so we can look at those nice blue "Your Ontario Tax Dollars At Work" signs again.

But this afternoon, as we watch the Chair of Management Board enumerate the cuts, the minister of pleasantville, the Minister of Transportation, should know that we expect to see capital funding more than maintained, increased, and the projects on Highway 17, Highway 6 and others brought to the forefront and accomplished in a very certain time.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): I'm certainly glad to be here today to listen to the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. The member has presented a very good resolution in terms of what he sees as the interests of his constituents. Having worked in eastern Ontario a few years back, in Smiths Falls, in education, there is no doubt that back in those days 417 and a lot of the network of highways in eastern Ontario certainly needed improvement. If you look back through the years, I guess if you used a Richter scale or bar charts of overall road conditions, it would be interesting to see how things have evolved from those days up till 1999.

I'll go back to the history in a short time, but I wanted to review for the edification of this House what the government has already achieved in terms of improving road infrastructure in eastern Ontario. I'm glad that the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke noted that this has to be done, in terms of road expansion, rehabilitation, infrastructure improvement, within the competing resources of an overall budget that is set out by cabinet and the respective professional management people in the various ministries.

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It seems to me that when you look at the recent history of what has gone on in terms of road expansion improvement and rehabilitation in eastern Ontario, we in this government have done a pretty good job in terms of prudently balancing our expenditures with what we see as the need for infrastructure improvement, whether they be ongoing maintenance, upgrades, rehabilitation or expansion. We want to ensure that future generations have a safe road network throughout Ontario and also ensure that we recognize economic competitiveness.

The member for Carleton-Gloucester has pointed out that we have made our commitment and lived up to it on the expansion, improvement and completion of Highway 416. Now we're working on Highway 417. It's only recently that we had another nine kilometres committed to success, and that is the promise of the four-lane Highway 417 from regional road 49 west to Panmure Road, which was an \$11-million contract. It's completed; it's open. At the current time there's ongoing engineering construction and design going on, as well as environmental approvals. Let me remind the House that the design for the four-lane alignment for Highway 17 from regional road 20 to regional road 22 is currently under way, including the Mississippi bridge design. Property acquisition for the right-of-way is also in progress. Indeed, we're also commencing the preliminary design studies on the four-laning of the highway from Arnprior to Renfrew.

The question is, are we keeping the promise? Yes, we are keeping the promise.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): No you're not.

Mr Hastings: Well, if we aren't, then I guess the member for Kingston and the Islands hasn't been up to see what has been going on in eastern Ontario in the last few years. Since the member is so informed on this, I'd

like to remind him—and it would be nice to see, when we vote on this particular resolution, and I'm sure his colleague from Pembroke would be interested in seeing, how we can explore with the federal government perhaps a renewal of the COIW program, the Canada-Ontario infrastructure works program that was done 1994-95. That is a way of looking at building on your road success in terms of what was accomplished then.

Going back to the history of this whole expansion of our roads network across this country, let me remind you that it was the Diefenbaker government back in 1959-60 that committed to a roads-to-resources policy, not just across the middle of Canada but in the far north. The author of that design, that vision, was the Honourable Alvin Hamilton. It resulted in the development of the Trans-Canada Highway across this great country.

In the current middle years, we haven't seen from federal governments, whatever their political stripe, the need and the necessity to renew our infrastructure in that particular regard. I may not be correct in my recall, but I believe Highway 417 through the valley formed an original part of that whole network from British Columbia to Newfoundland. We've noticed in the last few years that Minister Collenette has made frequent announcements, before he went to cabinet, that he was going to get us billions of dollars for public transit and highway improvement infrastructure. About a year ago, when I was in northwestern Ontario, I had the opportunity to speak with several of the media at that point, when it was pointed out that we had made major investments, major expenditures, to the highway system and particularly the bridge network in northwestern Ontario. If you look at today's expenditure, nearly \$700 million has been put into expansion, maintenance and rehabilitation of the road system across this province.

If Minister Collenette at the time was serious about trying to get a few more dollars for our national infrastructure, when you combine it with the whole NAFTA-highway thing that the federal Liberals are certainly very recently converted to, then perhaps we need to look at the possibility with the member opposite of developing that strategy further and seeing whether, when he talks about the immediacy, the urgent priority of completing and widening Highway 417 from Arnprior to Renfrew, we could work with the federal government in this regard.

If we're looking at an improved infrastructure—the widening of the highway is not only for safety reasons but also for economic development—then this is a particular strategy that I think we can work on together. I would commend the member to remark on this joint necessity.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I rise to support my colleague in urging the government to move quickly on the four-laning of this highway.

I would take up the point that the previous speaker just made and that is that, among other reasons, clearly there are economic reasons. I continue to remind ourselves that, as I think most members here know, Ontario now is perhaps the area in the world that relies the most on

exports for its economy. The most important page in the budget for me was where the province acknowledged and pointed out that 10 years ago roughly 25% of Ontario's economy was exports; today it's 50%. We've gone from about a quarter of our GDP, gross domestic product, being exports to half of it now being exports. There's nothing in our economy that's more important than our trade, particularly with the US.

So one key reason is economic, that all areas of this province have to be assured that they're going to share in the economic opportunities of trade, particularly with the US, and for that reason it's important that we move quickly.

I would say that the funding of this is a matter of extreme concern. If you look at the budget documents, firstly, the Ministry of Transportation capital budget has gone down dramatically. Next year, the government tells us, it plans to cut its capital expenditures by about 40%. That was in the budget. They said that in the fiscal year we're in right now, 1999-2000, they plan to spend roughly \$2.7 billion on capital and then next year they plan to reduce that to about \$1.7 billion. They're going to reduce capital expenditures in Ontario by 40%. That's what they say.

I might add that the government itself has told us that in the province we should be spending about \$4 billion each and every year on capital refurbishment for our infrastructure. How is the government going to do that? Historically, if you look at the capital budget for the province of Ontario, we have tended to spend roughly \$4 billion. The Harris government has said, "No, we're going to cut that from \$4 billion to \$2 billion, on average, over the next five years and we're going to get \$10 billion from the private sector." That's the plan for building roads. They're going to get half of the money from the private sector.

I say to the people of Ontario, the private sector is in the business of making money. That's why they're there. To think that the private sector is simply going to, out of the goodness of its heart, build these roads is naive at best. If we are banking on the future of our highway system being funded by the private sector, and that's what the government's told us, we're in for nothing but toll roads. In particular, I say the 407 users have really been sold down the road. The government doubled the price of the 407, sold the road for 99 years and told the purchaser, "Listen, you can take the tolls up every single year for inflation plus 2%." It's a licence to print money for the purchaser of the 407. For the government, pre-election, Harris got an extra \$1.6 billion, but for the poor users of the 407, for 99 years you're going to be paying off that nice little pre-election goody of Mike Harris.

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The reason I raise this is, we already know what the government plans to do. They're going to cut capital expenditures in half. They used to spend \$4 billion; they're going to cut it to \$2 billion. They say, "We're going to go to the private sector and somehow or other

they will magically give us \$2 billion a year.” It’s not going to happen.

What is extremely important to the future of Ontario is clearly our infrastructure. Our trade with the US is clearly important. A key element of that is our highway system. Yet we already know the government plans to cut capital from what we used to spend, from \$4 billion to \$2 billion, and somehow or other thinks that miraculously we’re going to find the money from the private sector. The only way it will come is by user-pay. Those who happen to live in a part of the province where the road has already been built should say, “Thank you very much.” But those in the areas that need their roads refurbished or need new roads should say: “My goodness, the future doesn’t look particularly bright for me. I thought Harris was all about cutting my taxes, not imposing a brand-new tax in the form of a toll.”

I support my colleague’s motion. I say that it is imperative for our future economy that we refurbish our highway system and that the plan the Harris government has embarked on is, in my opinion, doomed to failure.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): It’s a pleasure for me to support my friend and colleague from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke on a very important resolution.

First of all, I’d like to address the comments made by my colleague across the way, from Carleton-Gloucester, in his revisionist view of history. I’d just point out that the four-laning of Highway 16, which at the time was an extremely dangerous highway, was announced in 1989 by the Peterson government, of which I was part. We were happy to make that announcement and begin that commitment. Unfortunately, the extension was too long, especially during the NDP period, but everyone has to agree that today that particular four-lane highway is safer, is being utilized and has improved the commerce by way of Ottawa through to the 401, Kingston, Toronto and points beyond.

The same must be said, of course, of Highway 17. We know it is doable. The government made a commitment during the election campaign and we know that, once it is done and it continues to be extended, that will be applauded.

The extension has been going on ever so slowly. In recent years we’ve seen the extension go from the city limits of Ottawa to Kanata, then from Kanata to the Highway 17 exchange, then from there to the Almonte turnoff, where it is today. That has improved the safety in that stretch of land, without question, but we still need the promise to be fulfilled.

I know that many of my constituents in Ottawa Centre use this highway, as do large numbers of businesses in my riding. It’s a pipeline for Ottawa and eastern Ontario and the upper valley and, beyond, to northern Ontario. The fact is, it is as busy as it is reflective of the economic value to the city of Ottawa and the Ottawa Valley.

Quick and safe mobility of goods really is, as has already been stated, a building block of economic prosperity. Highway 17 is too overcrowded and unsafe to make that guarantee at the moment. Many trucks use it

because it is the most direct route through that particular corridor. I know I speak for the business community of Ottawa, as my colleagues will vouch for the businesses in the upper valley, when I say that this highway is necessary and would be good for the economy of eastern Ontario and, by extension, for Ontario and Canada.

In terms of tourism, I know that many of my friends as well as myself like to travel to the upper Ottawa Valley to take in the great natural beauty of it, for example the Algonquin Park area and all along the Ottawa River. Almost everyone I know has a story about a close call, a mishap or witnessing a crash while travelling on the highway. I’m quite sure that it causes people to think twice in many circumstances.

Indeed, the government has made a commitment, and it was reinforced by the parliamentary assistant this morning and I’m delighted to hear that. The question is, of course, when will that begin? We’ve heard promises before that there would be an extension of this four-lane highway to Renfrew, ultimately to Pembroke and beyond and, hopefully, at the same time there will be an acknowledgement of another highway from Sudbury through to Parry Sound, Highway 69, which in and of itself needs some urgent attention as well. But we’ll have that debate another day.

I’d like to complete my comments from a personal point of view. One afternoon last summer I was driving home with my wife down Highway 7 back to Ottawa, and we were diverted to another outlet back on to the highway back to Ottawa. We saw that there was a big crash, we didn’t know who it was at the time and I was saddened to hear the next morning that the dad of one of my colleagues in our research staff had been killed in that particular accident. The driver, having had a heart attack, swerved into the other lane. My point is, that could have been avoidable had we had a four-lane twinned highway.

I hope that the government will respond as quickly. I’m happy to support the resolution put forward by my colleague.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I’m pleased to join the debate this morning. Given the track record of the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke—they’ve really handed you quite a label for your riding—I’m not at all surprised that, first of all, personal safety is a part of the member’s resolution and, second, that it deals with an important matter in his riding. He often sets an example of ensuring that one’s riding is given the priority that it needs. I have learned a great deal from watching the member over the years I’ve been here; and I congratulate my colleague from Mississauga South—is it still, Margaret?—as we all have. I think it is not an over-the-top statement at all to suggest that many of us have learned many things from this member.

I just want to say—

Applause.

Mr Christopherson: Yes, go ahead and give him a round of applause. He deserves it. I believe he is also the

dean of the House, or one of the co-deans. That makes you co-dean. You might want to think about that.

Our caucus is very supportive of this measure. Anything that involves people's safety: You know, the government talks a great story about caring about safety and caring about people, but oftentimes we find in this place—pardon the pun—when the rubber hits the road, the reality is that you're not there. You're there in words, you're great with the words but you're not there with the action.

What I think the honourable member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke would have hoped to hear today was a clear commitment or, at the very least, that we would get enough backbenchers from the government who care about public safety and road safety that we could carry a message from this House. Even though motions and resolutions passed here aren't binding, they carry a lot of weight and add moral support to our arguments that are made here in the House, but at this point from what I've seen of the debate it doesn't look like that's going to happen, and it really is unfortunate.

I travel the QEW a lot, obviously, from my riding to Queen's Park, and I tell the government you've got to start paying a lot more attention to transportation and the issues related to transportation such as public transit, and I know there are recent announcements about GO looking at extending their service, that should be a much greater priority. Again, given the downloading exercises we have seen from this government, that is now all the more difficult as a result of your dumping on municipalities all of these responsibilities. That's not even yet to talk about urban public transit within our municipalities which—all of that responsibility—you, the Harris government, have dumped on to municipalities.

In our urban centres we're not just talking about the efficient movement of people and the right that people have to access all parts of their community through an affordable public transit system. The environment is such a key issue, and we know that one of the major pollutants is the exhaust fumes from vehicles, the clean air program notwithstanding, we still face a major challenge. So when you deal with transportation, I would agree that one of the issues is the economics of it.

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One of the benefits to the Golden Horseshoe and why we are the economic centre that we are, a lot of it has to do with our close linkage and accessibility to key American markets within an hour's or two-hour drive. Obviously, there's a good economic argument to be made. The first one ought to be public safety. The second one is indeed economic. Then you get into the whole issue of how these things are going to be paid for—everything comes back to money—and you've decided that you're going to put all the money you can lay your hands on into a tax cut, which your wealthy friends benefit from the most.

Today we're going to see the beginning result of your winning the election on a platform of a 20% tax cut. Today we are going to see hundreds of millions of dollars

that the government is going to claim is all about fat and efficiencies, and yet everybody else across the province will see it as cutting into muscle. We're going to see hundreds of millions of dollars announced today coming out of public service for one reason and one reason only: so that this government can give a continuing tax gift to their friends.

People are beginning to catch on. It has taken a few years for these things to settle in and the implications to take hold, but as we see the kinds of pressures building around our education, health care—which are the two big issues out there—there are incredible pressures on both. Now you have to find close to at least what you've announced publicly in a booming economy. That number changes if this economy starts to slide.

We're getting close to \$1 billion that you've identified you have to take out. Anybody who has even a cursory knowledge of what happens with the accounts around here and where the money goes and where it's spent will understand and appreciate that a further billion dollars is going to put enormous pressure on important crucial public services, and transportation at some point is going to be hit.

People are now realizing that they didn't get much out of that 30% tax cut. Yes, it sounded good and they may even have voted for you, but as they watch what's happening in the classrooms, in hospitals, in terms of municipal services, at the library, with recreational services, they're beginning to see that this wasn't a fair trade-off for them. They're not one of those that make \$250,000 a year who get \$26,000 back after taxes. That's what people get who make \$250,000. Under your first round with the 30%, they got \$26,000 after taxes. It's completely understandable why they voted for you.

Any cuts you make in public health, public education, even public transportation, for that matter, since they now have the ability to use highways where they pay directly—we were the ones who introduced that. I'm not trying to dodge away from that. Nonetheless, it's always understood that if you want to pay that money, you can get around something. It's one thing to talk about that in terms of how much is saving 15 minutes on a highway worth to me, versus the only way I can give my kids a decent education is to make sure I cough up the money to send them to a private school; God forbid, as we're seeing in Alberta, Ralph Klein is now—you know the thin edge of the wedge is there—introducing private hospitals.

Make no mistake, it's not going to be long before this government goes there too, because everything that Ralph Klein has done in Alberta, you have followed, or in an attempt to get even better coverage in the right-wing media—by that I mean those that are committed to right-wing Conservative supply-side, trickle-down theory. They've been hailing Ralph Klein as this great beacon of hope for the future and Mike got jealous. Where he can, the Premier likes to do one better than Ralph Klein.

I raise this in the context of this speaker because what the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke needs in order to provide the safety that his constituents deserve is money. It comes down to money. As long as this government has decided that giving continuing tax breaks to their wealthy friends is more important than the safety of our citizens on the highway, more important than the education of our children, more important than providing adequate and sufficient health care services to our families, then we're going to continue to see these kinds of resolutions and motions coming forward and pointing out that you're not delivering.

It was interesting that in the annual report of the Provincial Auditor, tabled the other day, one of the things the auditor points out is that you've been trying to cook the books with regard to contracting out highway maintenance, and by including as a revenue stream the selling of capital assets; in other words, the actual machinery that the government used when they were providing the maintenance to the highways. You were trying to show that there's more money there than there really is. The auditor cut away all your smoke and mirrors, and what was left was the realization that contracting out doesn't work, which we've been telling you for years. Obviously there are places for the private sector, but to believe holus-bolus as an ideology that everything in the public domain is better in private is simply not true. The auditor has now exposed you on this.

Ontarians are receiving less service in terms of the maintenance of our provincial highways and it's costing more money. The only ones who are benefiting are, guess who? Your pals who own the construction firms, who got the contracts when you took it out of the public sector and put it in the private sector. Let's not forget that in the process of doing that, to make this as profitable as possible for your friends—because that's what this was about; it wasn't about providing better highways, it wasn't about improving Highway 17 or any other highway; it was about making sure your pals can make a profit off the taxpayer's back—what did you do to help grease the way? You took away successor rights.

What does that mean in plain language? It means that for everybody else in Ontario, if you sell your company, your corporation, your service and there's a collective agreement in place, by law that collective agreement and the benefits those workers fought for and are entitled to go with the sale—except that this government brought in a law just for public sector workers, because we know that this government thinks that anybody who works for the government is evil. I haven't quite figured out how that doesn't apply to them, since they're in the public trough in terms of where their paycheque comes from, but everybody else in the public sector is deemed to be evil, inefficient, lazy and all those other negative kinds of connotations. This government brought in a law that said, "When we privatize a public service and sell it to our wealthy friends, the collective agreement is dead." Those wage rates that were guaranteed are gone.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I've been sitting here for the last 10 minutes and I've been wondering what the member has had to say yet that has anything to do with Highway 17.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): That is not a point of order. I would ask the member for Hamilton West to continue.

Mr Christopherson: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'm not surprised at the interjection. They often do that when you start to get at what is really going on around here; they get all upset. I would say to the member that I think my comments have been very much germane and to the point.

I'm talking about the fact that because you have taken every dime that you can find and have given it to your wealthy friends, there's not enough money to take care of the four-laning of Highway 17. In addition, I'm arguing that not only is there not enough money for Highway 17, there's not enough money for the kind of expanded GO system that we really need, there's not enough money available for public transit in our major urban centres, which also attaches to the environmental concerns that you profess to care about at the same time that you're dismantling the environmental protections that we've built up over decades. I'm arguing also that the money you're taking and giving to your friends by virtue of a continuing tax cut is affecting our ability to put our kids through the kind of education system they deserve and have the kind of health care system they're entitled to. I think that's very much germane to this point.

The fact is that you don't want to hear about what happens after you make the announcement about the tax cut. All you want to talk about is, "Hey, we're going to cut your taxes." That's a wonderful message. We all think that's fine and wonderful. Nobody wants to pay more taxes, but there's a price to be paid. When you're talking of the amount, the billions of dollars, that this government has taken out of health care, education, environmental protection, social services, and yes, transportation, I think it's very much germane to this resolution.

I think quite frankly that had you not given the billions of dollars to your wealthy friends that you did, there would be enough money to put the lives and the safety of the constituents of the riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke in a much higher priority than you have done. I think that's very germane. You may not think so because you do not want to think past tax cut, tax cut, tax cut, money, money, money, money. Listen, we're talking about lives here. We're talking about the ability that you have a responsibility to provide in terms of the safety of the citizens of eastern Ontario, and you're not meeting that obligation because you're taking care of your rich friends.

Mr Conway: I want to thank all of my colleagues for their contributions to this debate. I want to say three things in summary. First, about the money, I was encouraged by the comments particularly from Mr Hastings and

to some extent Mr Coburn on the government bench. I understand the pressure about money.

But I'm sitting here as someone who imagines that I am someplace in the Ottawa Valley, and what do I know? I know that this year I will pay something in excess of \$2 billion provincially in gasoline taxes. If I factor in the fuel tax and the motor vehicle registration fees or taxes, that's another \$900 million. I will know that this year I will give to the provincial government nearly \$3.5 billion of road and road-related taxes.

As my friend from Algoma rightly observed, it is a reasonable expectation that the vast majority of those road-related taxes will go to road-related spending; and we are not doing that. It is a very unfair tax policy to ask rural and northern people, who do not have OC Transpo, who do not have the Hamilton Transit Commission, who do not have the Toronto Transit Commission running subways. If you live in Palmer Rapids and Deux-Rivieres and Calabogie, your car or your half-ton truck, your neighbour's car and half-ton truck, is your way of getting to work, of getting to the hospital or getting to see some business colleague.

We cannot be imposing these road taxes without, as a provincial government, doing a better job of spending a greater portion of those monies provincially on the purposes for which they're intended.

Let me conclude by noting, as the editor of the Arnprior Chronicle Guide noted a few months ago on this question: "Will this highway be improved? Yes." But he said, in an editorial, "Will I live long enough to see it or will old age or a highway fatality on 17 take me before that improvement is made?"

What we need, I say to the government, what my constituents in the Ottawa Valley want, is a specific commitment, a specific timetable as to how and when Highway 17 will be four-laned to Arnprior and then to Renfrew.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The time for private members' business has expired.

We will deal first with ballot item number 3, standing in the name of Mr Maves. Is it the pleasure of the House this resolution carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. We will deal with this item concurrently with the other item.

HIGHWAY 17

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): We will now deal with ballot item number 4, standing in the name of Mr Conway. Is it the pleasure of the House the resolution carry? Carried.

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

The division bells rang from 1205 to 1210.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): We are dealing with ballot item number 3 standing in the name of Mr Maves. All those in favour, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Baird, John R.	Hastings, John	Munro, Julia
Barrett, Toby	Kells, Morley	Mushinski, Marilyn
Chudleigh, Ted	Klees, Frank	O'Toole, John
Coburn, Brian	Marland, Margaret	Stewart, R. Gary
Dunlop, Garfield	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tascona, Joseph N.
Elliott, Brenda	Maves, Bart	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Galt, Doug	Mazzilli, Frank	

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Churley, Marilyn	Levac, David
Arnott, Ted	Cleary, John C.	McLeod, Lyn
Bartolucci, Rick	Colle, Mike	Parsons, Ernie
Bountrogianni, Marie	Conway, Sean G.	Patten, Richard
Boyer, Claudette	Crozier, Bruce	Peters, Steve
Bradley, James J.	Duncan, Dwight	Phillips, Gerry
Brown, Michael A.	Gerretsen, John	Ruprecht, Tony
Bryant, Michael	Kormos, Peter	Smitherman, George
Caplan, David	Kwinter, Monte	Wood, Bob
Christopherson, David	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Young, David

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 20; the nays are 30.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the resolution lost.

This House stands adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1212 to 1334.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): I wanted to speak briefly this afternoon regarding the Provincial Auditor's report yesterday and just to remind everyone in the House of the kind of discussions we have had in the Windsor area for the last four years around hospital restructuring. How must it feel today for residents from my riding in our area to know that the Provincial Auditor vindicated everything that our community has said since the restructuring process began?

When we turn the pages of the auditor's report, which is the most damning report that has ever been written in the history of the Ontario government's record on how it does its financing of appropriate services in Ontario, this one in particular is most scathing. What's difficult to accept is the fact that what you do is affecting people's lives, in particular our hospitals. We have both Windsor hospitals now running a deficit yet again, one of \$8 million, another of \$7 million. Your one-time funding of many hospitals across the board just before the last elec-

tion was just propaganda and meant to silence your foes before you got into an election.

If I may read "Implementation of hospital restructuring," what he said was, "It needed a careful sequencing of changes." All we can say to that is: No kidding. We have been telling you that for years and you should have been more attentive to the members who represent those ridings.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I rise today to commend our government and the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations for forming a task force to investigate gasoline prices. For far too long now, we have watched the federal Liberals sit back and watch gasoline prices soar right out of sight in Ontario and across the country. In fact, a local federal Liberal member said she wished the gas price problem would just go away because she was tired of it. How dare she and the federal Liberals treat our gasoline consumers with such contempt.

It's crystal clear that the federal government is totally responsible for the gasoline marketplace in Canada, yet they choose to do nothing. Well, our government will do something. We will investigate gasoline prices and present our findings to the federal government, just like we promised in the speech from the throne.

I am proud to co-chair the task force with my colleague, PA for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations and the member for Durham, John O'Toole, and serve with the member for Scarborough Southwest and the member from Halton. We've just seen another overnight five- to six-cent increase in the price of gasoline and our consumers are furious. They've had enough. We must get to the bottom of this seemingly endless round of gasoline price increases, and I believe our task force will do just that.

The federal government is responsible for the gasoline marketplace under the federal Competition Act, but they continue to do nothing. We hope our report will spur them to action, because our consumers are fed up and they want action now.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I have in my hand the resolutions of municipalities across northwestern Ontario expressing concerns about the inadequacies of the northern health travel grant. I have petitions signed by hundreds of residents of northwestern Ontario communities expressing the same concerns. I have letter after letter bringing concerns about the unfairness and arbitrary administration of this grant. I have the submission from the Northwestern Ontario District Health Council asking the minister for a review of the travel grant. And I have the minister's constant response to every constituent case we raise and to the health coun-

cil itself, saying the ministry has no plans to amend the current policy.

The minister's letter defends a policy which is blatantly unfair and discriminatory. When cancer patients from southern Ontario have to travel to the United States or to northern Ontario for care they can't receive in a timely way in their home communities, all costs of transportation and accommodation are paid. But when northern Ontario residents have to leave their home communities to receive care that cannot be provided at home, they have only a portion of their costs offset. The only justification for this discrimination is that northerners have to do this on a regular basis. For people in southern Ontario, it is hopefully, a temporary necessity.

In fact, there is no justification for any resident of this province having to pay often thousands of dollars out of their own pockets to receive medically necessary care. There is no excuse for the rigidity of the way in which applications for the minimal support that's offered are being handled. It is unconscionable that requests can be refused because of inappropriate application of rules that distort the intent of the program.

It is time to review the northern health travel grant program.

1340

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY OFFICE

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): The Provincial Auditor's report condemns once again and reveals the negligence and gross mismanagement by this government of the Family Responsibility Office, formerly the family support plan. The report confirms everything that opposition members have been saying about this program for over three years now, and it confirms what Shelley Martel and I revealed back in November 1996 when we brought videotape to this assembly to illustrate that the government's claims about the plan being up and running were nothing but pure gibberish and nothing short of an outright—fill in the blank, Speaker. It was an outright, and you know it.

Women and children suffer on an ongoing basis. This government clearly doesn't like women and kids. This government clearly doesn't want to serve their interests. It could be done with even a modest amount of political will, and this government has no interest in that.

This government's gross mismanagement of the family support plan leads to only one conclusion: that it wants to drive the FRO and the FSP into such a state that this government will indicate that it cries out for privatization.

This government continues to spend millions of dollars in a grossly negligent way. This Attorney General has exceeded the capacity of his predecessor, Charlie Harnick, in displaying incompetence and lack of interest in the adequate operation of the FRO system, a very important program for women and kids. This government had better straighten up soon.

OPTIMIST CLUB OF NEWMARKET

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): I rise today to congratulate the Optimist Club of Newmarket on their 50th anniversary. I recently had the honour to bring greetings from the province at the celebration to commemorate this wonderful milestone.

The Optimist Club, whose members number in the thousands across the world, was built on the philosophy of positive thinking and an upbeat approach to life and work. In this way, its members are able to make a positive difference in the lives of those around them.

For 50 years, the members of the Optimist Club of Newmarket have volunteered thousands of hours to their community, and particularly to helping their youth lead productive and successful lives.

Newmarket has grown a lot since 1949, and the Optimist Club has been equal to the challenge. Through their development of corporate partnerships with community-based businesses, they are particularly able to assist the youth of Newmarket in a variety of ways. They fundraise for the children's ward at York County Hospital; they provide the facilities for army, sea and air cadets to hold their meetings; they sponsor hockey, soccer and baseball throughout the community. Through their tireless efforts and dedication to helping others, the Optimist Club of Newmarket has helped many of our young people know the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, as well as the joy of helping others.

I want to thank the volunteer members of the Optimist Club of Newmarket for all of their excellent work, making the lives of our youth and other members of our community that much richer.

FORT HENRY

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): On Tuesday, the Minister of Tourism was asked by a government member about the steps the ministry was taking to preserve Fort Henry, a major tourist site attracting 150,000 people annually and an integral part of our history.

The minister said, and I quote, that Parks Canada was "not putting any money into it in terms of a long-term commitment to ensure its preservation." He also patted himself on the back by saying he was proud of the fact that his ministry was putting in \$1.2 million per year.

To set the record straight, what the minister did not say was that in fact the provincial funding over the last four years has decreased by 50%, from over \$2.5 million to \$1.2 million. He also did not say that Parks Canada has set up an endowment fund of \$5 million, the interest from which the fort can use for restoration purposes. It's the first time any level of government has committed permanent funding for the fort.

If the minister is really interested, and I quote again, in preserving these "important heritage properties," let him show this by fighting in cabinet to restore funding to the

1995 level. It's good for Kingston, it's good for tourism, and it's good for our Ontario economy.

To quote the Premier, "On our side of the House, our code of conduct is to insist on the truth," something that seems to have escaped some members on the other side.

PAROLE SYSTEM

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I want to take this opportunity to make the House aware of a movement that is underway in Scarborough.

The former city of Scarborough was the scene of the Scarborough rapist attacks several years ago. Many neighbourhoods have forever been changed because of these attacks. It should come as no surprise that the community's reaction to Karla Homolka's potential parole has been one of complete outrage.

As an elected representative in Scarborough, I have had to deal with the aftermath of these crimes. I believe it is vital to provide the community with an opportunity to voice their anger over recent developments. That is why I have started a petition drive supporting further improvements to the justice system so that criminals such as Karla Homolka who commit unspeakable crimes will find it nearly impossible to gain early release.

Thanks to strong coverage by the Scarborough Mirror newspaper, over 500 copies of the petition have already been distributed. In the first two days of the petition drive, my office received over 200 requests for copies. I have been overwhelmed by the support that I have received from the public, and I look forward to this government building upon its already successful reforms of the justice system.

SOINS DE SANTÉ

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): C'est dans l'intérêt des citoyens et citoyennes de ma circonscription que je dois porter à l'attention de l'Assemblée mon inquiétude à l'égard des coupures à notre système de santé.

Il y a quelques semaines, j'ai pris connaissance de l'annonce de la fermeture de quatre des six cliniques de radiographie dans ma circonscription. La compagnie Diagnosticare Inc est maintenant la propriétaire de ces cliniques.

La clinique d'Alfred a déjà fermé ses portes. Les cliniques de Plantagenet, Clarence Creek et Rockland feront l'objet de fermeture à compter du 30 novembre prochain. Une cinquième, dont celle d'Embrun, pourrait s'ajouter à la liste.

Nos médecins ont été avisés par cette même entreprise privée que les coupures budgétaires du ministre de la Santé étaient la raison de ces fermetures.

On doit comprendre qu'aucun transport en commun n'existe dans ma circonscription. Comment dois-je expliquer aux personnes âgées de ma circonscription qu'ils devront prendre l'autoroute pour se rendre à Ottawa ou à Hawkesbury pour obtenir une radiographie ?

L'autre alternative serait d'avoir recours aux services d'ambulance pour se rendre à la salle d'urgence de l'hôpital de Hawkesbury ou d'Ottawa pour obtenir ce service.

Imaginez l'impact de ces fermetures de services dans nos communautés. Les conséquences pourraient même porter au départ de quelques-uns de nos médecins.

Sommes-nous des citoyens de deuxième ordre, ou, à juste titre, sommes-nous dignes de recevoir les mêmes services que les autres citoyens de notre province ?

TEACHER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I rise in the House today to recognize Mrs Debbie Smith, a teacher at Terry Fox Public School in Cobourg, in my riding.

Mrs Smith is not an average teacher. Due to her recognition as a "compassionate educator," Mrs Smith will be receiving the 1999 Toronto Sun Teacher of the Year award. She is among 11 other winners who were chosen from about 1,500 nominations.

All of this attention and recognition is unarguably a result of her warm, caring and compassionate approach to education. The Teacher of the Year award was established to promote public awareness of teaching excellence and to encourage parents, students and teachers to focus on positive education practices.

Debbie Smith qualifies because of her positive leadership in education. Her young students even proclaim that "Mrs Smith is the best!" Her superintendent of schools, Beth Selby, refers to Mrs Smith as being energized by what she does for her students. What she is doing is fostering a positive school environment.

I applaud Debbie Smith for being recognized as a Teacher of the Year. I extend my warmest wishes to Mrs Smith, her students, and her family.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): I move that the following amendments be made to the membership of certain committees: Mr Hoy replaces Mr Ruprecht on the standing committee on regulations and private bills; Ms Di Cocco replaces Mr Hoy on the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly; and Mrs Dombrowsky replaces Mr Smitherman on the standing committee on government agencies.

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

1350

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

NATIONAL CHILD DAY

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [Children]): Today we celebrate children, our most important legacy for the future. I know that every member of this House recognizes the very special place that children have in our hearts and in our world.

On November 20, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child will celebrate its 10th anniversary. This convention is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in world history. To mark this occasion, Canada joins nations around the world in observing a National Child Day.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes children's basic human rights and gives them additional rights to protect them from harm. The convention also acknowledges the important role of the family in raising children.

National Child Day reminds us that all children need nurturing, protection, love, respect and security to reach their full potential. As our province's first-ever minister responsible for children, I am proud that the Ontario government is working towards the goals of the convention.

Today, I would like to share with members of this House a few examples of our commitment to children. Early intervention and prevention are the cornerstone of our initiatives. We are providing a better start for approximately 150,000 newborn babies in Ontario each year by giving new mothers the option to stay in the hospital longer after the birth of their baby. Through the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program, we are also providing screening and follow-up care within 48 hours of hospital discharge to see how the mother and child are doing.

Our \$20-million preschool speech and language program is helping 70,000 young children with speech and language difficulties to get the help they need before they start school.

We will soon announce details on a new intensive early intervention program for two- to five-year-old children with autism. Funding for this program will grow to \$19 million annually.

We also provide \$2.5 million annually to our partnership with the Canadian Living Foundation. As a result, over 72,000 children receive breakfast each school day in over 1,330 local child nutrition programs.

Child care is another important support for young children and their families. Since March of 1995, the capacity of Ontario's licensed child care system has been increased by almost 19,000 spaces. This government spent approximately \$700 million on child care services in 1998-99, the highest amount in our province's history.

Further, as many as 350,000 children in more than 210,000 Ontario families with low and middle incomes are benefiting from the Ontario child care supplement for working families.

Through the Ontario workplace child tax incentive, we are also providing businesses with a 30% tax deduction for the capital costs of building or expanding child care facilities in their workplaces and communities.

Clearly, our government's track record on child care is second to none. Every child has the right to grow up in a safe and secure environment. For this reason, our government made vitally important amendments to the Child and Family Services Act to put the interests of the child first. The threshold of risk of physical and emotional harm to children will be lowered, and the word "neglect" will be included as a result of this bill.

Another important government responsibility is to assist children with special needs. Following my discussions last fall with children, parents and service providers in communities all across Ontario, the government announced new funding for children's mental health services, growing to \$20 million annually.

We will also enhance respite care for up to 1,700 families caring for medically fragile and technologically dependent children.

These are just some of the highlights of our government's record so far. I am very proud of our commitment to Ontario's children. But there is still much to do.

That is why Premier Harris commissioned the Early Years Study, and our government has embraced the study's findings.

In the recent throne speech, our government reaffirmed our belief that, to realize their full potential, children must have the best possible start in life. We have committed to build on the pioneering work of world-renowned expert Dr Fraser Mustard and noted child advocate the Honourable Margaret McCain. Ontario's early years program will extend early development opportunities to children and their parents across the province.

I recently announced the creation of five demonstration projects to test different community-based approaches to early child development and parenting.

Our government is also fulfilling another important recommendation of the study, through a task group which will advise us on the key elements and standards for an early years programs. Also, an early years challenge fund will help communities establish and support child development and parenting programs.

Indeed, the Early Years Study will also have a positive impact on children and families in other parts of our great country. Premier Harris feels so strongly about the need to move forward on this study that he made it an agenda item at this year's annual premiers' conference in August. As a result, the study has been enthusiastically received by governments all across Canada. At a recent meeting of the federal-provincial-territorial social services ministers, everyone at the table agreed to move

forward as quickly as possible on early child development.

This government is determined to remain the national leader in early child development. We invite and encourage all levels of government and all sectors or our communities—including business, charitable and voluntary organizations—to join us in a partnership that will fulfill our promise to children.

Our children's hope for a future filled with opportunity, health, security and happiness rests with all of us today. Let us pledge to meet that hope to the best of our shared abilities.

SPENDING REDUCTIONS

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Our government promised in the Blueprint—our plan to keep Ontario on the right track—that all existing provincial government programs would be reviewed and justified for cost, necessity and efficiency.

I rise in the House today to say that the Ontario government continues to make government work better for taxpayers. To this end, the government has identified an additional \$300 million towards balancing the budget in the next fiscal year.

Government programs tend to grow year after year, layer upon layer, the result of which is constant upward pressure on government spending. We have often said we are here to fix government, to make it work better for taxpayers. Throughout our mandate we will continue to ensure we are doing the right things and doing them well.

In the last few months, the government has reviewed its programs to see if they continue to be relevant and delivered in a cost-effective way.

In the Blueprint, we committed to expand health care funding by a guaranteed 20% over five years. We also promised to increase classroom funding to match rising enrolment. Consequently, neither classroom funding nor health care are part of the actions I am announcing today.

1400

Through this review, the government found that some programs are no longer necessary. It found that others could be delivered better with less funding or with tighter controls and continue to serve Ontarians well. In short, we're working to make government work better for the people of Ontario.

Let me tell the members of this House about some of the savings we have identified. We will reduce costs for government space, saving taxpayers \$12 million. We will trim another \$75 million in administrative spending across government, for a total of almost \$90 million in administrative savings to the public. We will crack down on welfare fraud and make other improvements to social assistance, saving taxpayers approximately \$3 million. This includes requiring recipients to sell a second residence if they choose to be on welfare. Taxpayers will also save an additional \$75 million in social assistance payments next year. Even more savings are expected

from the social assistance budget as our economic policies promote record economic growth and fuel job creation.

These are just a few examples. I will be releasing further details later today. This government understands that governments don't have any of their own money; we only have the money that the taxpayers give us. We have a responsibility to manage that money effectively and efficiently.

Taxpayers work hard for the money they earn. We owe it to them to get value for the money they provide to the government. That's why we are determined to make government work better and to ensure that once we balance the budget, it stays balanced. Ontario taxpayers understand the importance of a balanced budget. They understand because they are expected to balance the books in their everyday lives and they know first-hand that it requires difficult decisions.

We also expect the broader public sector, such as municipalities and post-secondary institutions, which like us are funded by the taxpayers of Ontario, to manage their programs and salary budgets effectively. In the past year, we set an example in our own organization when we negotiated responsible collective agreements with our employees without raising taxes.

Four years ago, this government inherited a deficit of more than \$11 billion. Through tough decisions, the government has stuck to its plan to balance the budget next year, as promised. That progress has not happened by chance. It has taken hard work, tough decisions and, yes, leadership. A balanced budget and a sound fiscal plan are key factors to attract investment, create jobs and remain competitive. This government is committed to reaching its goal of a balanced provincial budget by the fiscal year 2000-01. We are committed to keeping it balanced thereafter. The job is not done. In fact, spending taxpayers' money wisely is a job that's never done. We will continue to work to find better ways to deliver quality programs that the people of Ontario need and deserve.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: I wrote to you before noon hour today—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Will the member take his seat. You will know the standing orders are very clear that on a point of privilege you need to advise the Speaker. I received it, but I did not receive any detail of what it was.

As you know, on November 3 I also reminded this House that on a point of privilege you're supposed to give me the details of what the point of privilege is about. I received notice but there was no indication of what it was about other than that it was a point of privilege, so I will not hear the point of privilege.

I say to the member, this is the second time I have said to the House that you need to explain in the notice to the Speaker what the point of privilege is all about. I did not receive that.

Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In fact my letter was very clear. We referenced standing order

1(b), where we talk about the purpose of these standing—

The Speaker: Order. Will the member take his seat. I have a copy of what he wrote, and it was not very clear. It was very simple, one line. It did not explain what the point of privilege is.

The standing orders are very clear. On the first occasion, I heard it, on November 3. I told the House that if it is going to be a point of privilege, then I need to have more of the details. They were not in that letter that came, so it is not a point of order.

Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker: The same point of order or a new point of order? A new point of order.

Mr Duncan: On a point of order, I seek unanimous consent of the House to ask the Chair of Management Board to table it in this House so we can have a democratic discussion of the cuts he's making.

You're hiding them. Our privileges as members are being abused, and you—

The Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent? I heard some noes.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In order for members this afternoon to be able to do their jobs appropriately, surely it is necessary for the minister, because he made reference in his statement, to have all of the details available for this House so he can't simply hide everything until after question period and then do his spinning all weekend, the way the government did with their throne speech and everything else they do around here.

The Speaker: That's not a point of order, and I have ruled on that.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: A new point of order?

Mr Gerretsen: A new point of order. Mr Speaker, I refer you to section 21(c) of the standing rules.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Government members, I can't hear the point of order. Please.

Mr Gerretsen: Mr Speaker, 21(c) of the standing rules, on page 18, specifically states, "Any member proposing to raise a point of privilege, other than one arising out of proceedings in the chamber during the course of a sessional day...."

The point I'm trying to make is that the minister made a statement here that later on he's going to make another statement outside of the House. It's a matter that arose while he was making the statement here today, so it's one in which the required notice of two hours does not have to be given, in my opinion.

The Speaker: That is not a point of order. The member made a statement here to the House in the time for the statements. He made that, and that is not a point of order.

Mr Duncan: Point of order.

The Speaker: A new point of order? The member for Windsor-St Clair.

Mr Duncan: The minister repeatedly referred to a document. Again, we have discussed this in the past with respect to the procedural question facing the Minister of the Environment. I would ask that that document be tabled in the House so the opposition has a fair opportunity to respond to it and that it not be jammed down the throat of this Legislature without an adequate opportunity to—

The Speaker: Will the member take his seat. I've got the gist. As you know, I've said on occasion that when a member refers to it in detail—he did not do that on this occasion, as they did not on the other occasions. It is not a point of order.

Responses? The leader of the official opposition.

NATIONAL CHILD DAY

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): Speaker, first of all with respect to the statement made by the minister in celebration of children on National Child Day, it is nothing less than the height of irony that this comes the very same week that the Provincial Auditor informs this House that there are no less than 128,000 cases before the Family Responsibility Office that are in arrears. That means there are over 200,000 children in Ontario today whose rights are not being protected by this minister and this government, and those are the facts. That's the record when it comes to kids and this government.

SPENDING REDUCTIONS

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): Second, with respect to the other minister's statement, he tells us once again in couched terms that they'll be doing nothing less and nothing more than cutting fat. Well, the last time they said they were going to cut some fat in the Ministry of the Environment, they cut 42% of the budget, they fired inspectors, they gutted environmental protection and they earned us the dubious and embarrassing international reputation of having the second-worst environmental record in North America. And to make matters worse, they've taken the man responsible for development on the Oak Ridges moraine and put him in charge of the damn ministry. When it comes to cuts, what they want to do now is make more cuts to the Ministry of the Environment.

The last time they said they were only going to cut the fat in health care, they cut \$870 million from our hospitals, they shut down hospitals and they fired thousands of our nurses, those people who are essential to deliver bedside care. Today in Ontario, two thirds of cancer patients aren't getting the care they need when they need it—that's two thirds. This government is failing two thirds of our cancer patients in Ontario. Mike Harris says: "Don't worry. I've established a lofty goal which is going to inspire my thinking, inform my efforts. I will ensure that fully one half of cancer patients are treated in a timely basis." We say that is nothing less than obscene.

1410

In addition, when it comes to health care in Ontario, our emergency rooms remain a mess. We still face massive doctor shortages. There are still thousands and thousands of Ontario families that cannot find a family doctor.

Yesterday, we saw that what this government thinks is unnecessary in education; namely, the classroom, programs for blind kids, programs for deaf kids, for the severely learning disabled. That's what this government means when it says its going to do away with inefficiencies in public education. Literacy programs, computers, textbooks—if you can believe it—that's what this government is out to cut, that's what this government thinks of when it says it's going to cut the fat in public education.

I'll tell you where the fat is in this government. It's in the Premier's office. The very first thing the Premier did after the election was to double the size of his own staff. In addition to that, he then gave all of his political staff and all of his ministers' political staffs fat raises, to the tune of 30%. This fell hard on the heels of this government using 100 million taxpayer dollars to fund its own partisan, political advertising campaign—a matter recently pointed out by the Provincial Auditor.

Then there is the little matter of the \$250 million the government spends on its high-priced consultants, most of them with tickets to Tory fundraisers tucked neatly beside their big fat government cheques. That's where the fat is. It's not inside the classroom, it's not inside our hospitals, it's no longer inside the Ministry of the Environment, it's not inside the Ministry of Agriculture, it's not inside any other particular ministry; it's inside the Premier's office. That's where it is.

These guys, at the end of the day, are not cutting back on patronage. They're not cutting back on their spin doctors. They're not cutting back on their own arrogance. The auditor pointed out last week that, in case after case, this government is prepared to find efficiencies even if it costs them more money. That's exactly what the Provincial Auditor just said: "You're not cutting fat; you're hurting people. You're not doing more with less; you're giving us less and you're costing us more."

I can assure you that we on this side of the House will fight this government every step of the way as it continues to cut those services that the people of this province are entitled to depend on, entitled to wake up in the morning and know that they're there for them.

NATIONAL CHILD DAY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): In response to the statement by the minister responsible for children's issues, what a disgrace. How could she get up and say this today when the Harris Conservatives have done more to put children at risk than any other government in living memory, have cut the income of children by 22% while giving \$180 million in corporate welfare to Andersen Consulting, which did nothing? Remember

that? They created chaos in the family support plan, leaving thousands of children destitute.

Up to 50,000 children now are using food banks monthly in the greater Toronto area, and more and more of the homeless are children. Disabled kids are sitting at home and not going to school because of cuts to special assistance. We fear that there are more cuts to come to programs. Child care centres in schools are closing. Shame on you, Minister. What a legacy you are leaving in this province for the children.

SPENDING REDUCTIONS

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):

Today we see the Harris government's spin control in action again. They're trying to say to people: "Don't worry, this will all be painless. The cuts that are coming are not going to affect you." But the people of Ontario have been around for a while and they know very well that drastic cuts are coming and they're cuts that are going to hurt ordinary people in 100 different ways.

This government talks about fixing government. Is that what you mean with the Family Responsibility Office, when women and children who need support payments go without month after month? Is that what you mean with the Ontario disability support office, when disabled people go without money they're entitled to for five or six months at a time because you don't care enough to get the office to work right? Is that what you mean when we see the nursing shortage that's happening in community after community? Is that fixing government? Is that what you mean when we send more and more cancer patients to the United States? Is that what you mean by fixing government? Is that what you mean when we see more and more people in community after community who can't find a place to live any more, who can't find affordable housing?

Let's be really clear on what's going on here. This is a government that has money for the most well-off people in this province through an income tax scheme that is so totally overbalanced it makes you want to cry. People who have the highest incomes get a tax cut. Ordinary people face higher tuition fees, prescription medicine copayment fees, motor vehicle registration fees and every fee under the sun. Their taxes are going up. Is that what you call fixing government?

The government says it's dealing with the deficit. They're going to do everything they can to give the appearance of a financial balance. But what they want people to ignore is the growing health deficit, the growing education deficit, the growing environmental deficit, the growing housing and homeless deficit and the growing social deficit. Those deficits are going to cost billions of dollars to fix when you're gone as government. You don't have a plan anywhere to deal with the really pressing health and education and environmental problems that this province faces because of what you've done. You haven't fixed government. You've made the things that matter to ordinary people in this province worse and

worse off by the day. What you've announced here today, what you've tried to skirt around, isn't going to do anything about those problems. It's going to make it worse.

I think what we've got here today is confirmation that the leaked government document of Monday is right. You're not going to announce the cuts to education, you're simply going to roll them out over Christmas and in the New Year, so that boards of education and colleges and universities that are expecting that funding, that have to have that funding if they're going to provide the courses and the programs, are suddenly going to discover it's not there. Then they're going to have to make cuts and you're going to say it's all their fault.

Well, it's not their fault. You have a responsibility in this province not just to look after the well-off but to look after the students, to look after the sick, to look after the children, to help look after the environment. Those are all the things that you're neglecting and you continue to neglect. Those are the things that are going to come back to bite you, because those are the things that are biting ordinary people across this province every day, and they know it and they're going to want the answers.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Today is the last day for our pages. I would ask all the members to join in thanking our pages for their dedication.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I would also draw to the members' attention that joining us in the Speaker's gallery today is a delegation from the Ontario-Quebec Parliamentary Association. I would ask all members to join in welcoming them as well.

Also, in the members' west gallery is the former member for Hamilton West, Richard Allen.

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The Chair of Management Board has just told us he's going to make an announcement at 3 o'clock. Could he tell us, please, where he's going to be so we can all be there and listen to what he's got to say?

The Speaker: That's not a point of order, but I'm sure the member can ask the minister.

1420

ORAL QUESTIONS

SPENDING REDUCTIONS

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Chair of Management Board. I want to talk to you about the double standard that's so obvious to us here today. Apparently, it's OK for the Premier to hire more people and pay them more, but deaf

and blind students will just have to wait and people who are desperately in need of cancer irradiation will have to wait as well. You're not cutting the staff in the Premier's office; you've doubled it. You're not cutting salaries for political hacks and flacks employed by your ministries; you've increased their salaries. Tell us, Minister, how is it that you can tolerate this disgusting double standard?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I think the Leader of the Opposition knows full well that when we deal with unions, we negotiate with them and we base it on the market. Sometimes it's a difficult process and we arrive at collective agreements which are fair and reasonable. When you're dealing with non-union staff, the Civil Service Commission makes recommendations. They look at the comparators inside the civil service, they look at what the federal government pays, they take a look at municipalities and they look at regional municipal political staff. I think you'd find that what was recommended and accepted was a change of the ranges in certain ministries. Some were lower in the entry, some were higher to get the skill set they needed.

What this exercise is about is part of our responsibility, part of our commitment to make sure that taxpayers' money is used wisely. I realize that our plan we campaigned on didn't have as much in total quantum of cuts as your plan did, but, nevertheless, we are living up to our commitments.

Mr McGuinty: It doesn't matter how you slice it and how you dice it, nobody out there is going to believe that it is reasonable and justifiable to award your political employees a 30% pay hike in this era, and good luck trying to sell that out there.

Let's just talk about the modus operandi that you people have clearly established during the past several years. You announce one thing and then you do another. In fact, that was made perfectly evident in the secret cabinet document that was brought under the light of day yesterday. It said: "Cut education in the classroom, but don't announce that. Don't tell anyone. Let's keep that dirty little secret." You make heartless and you make brainless cuts and then you deny that they ever happened.

Minister, we've seen it all before and this pattern fits your MO perfectly. Now, you have an opportunity. Would you please stand up and tell Ontario children and Ontario hospital patients the real story. What are your plans? What exactly are you going to cut in the way that you've done in the past?

Hon Mr Hodgson: Mr Speaker, I know the Minister of Education would like to refer to the education portion of that.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): Mr Speaker, through you to the honourable member who was asking, again I keep saying that if he wants to use the Toronto Star as his research department, I guess he can, but as I said yesterday, the Toronto Star article is not the government's plan.

The other thing I would like to add to the honourable member is—he says, "What is the government's true plan

for education?" Our true plan for education is exactly what we said it would be: to increase classroom funding, to make sure that the priority is in the classroom for those excellent teachers to do what they do best, to teach our students.

Classroom spending, for the honourable member's interest, since he seems to have missed this definition, includes teachers, teacher assistants, computers, textbooks, learning materials, professionals and paraprofessionals, library and guidance, staff development. Those are all important supports to make sure that our children get the education they need. We have been very clear that our priority will be to increase those dollars to match that enrolment—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Minister's time. Final supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: I want to come back to the Chair of Management Board. Does anybody over there ever stop and think about who it is you might be hurting with these cuts? When you gutted the Ministry of the Environment, as a result we've got more kids suffering from asthma than ever before in our province. We have seniors who are finding it very difficult to breathe. When you made your cuts to education, we've got children who are not getting the services they need when it comes to English as a second language, when it comes to special education, when it comes to early childhood education. Your health care bungling is hurting people with cancer. Their families—their brothers, their sisters, their mothers, their fathers—and their friends and loved ones are desperately waiting as a result of your bungling and mismanagement and cuts.

Does anybody over there recognize how arrogant it is to continue making these cuts without understanding who exactly you're going to be hurting? Does anybody there recognize that? Do you understand that with these cuts once more you are going to be hurting Ontarians?

Hon Mr Hodgson: To the Leader of the Opposition, there truly is a difference between our party and your party. Your party, when in power, raised record spending. If you want to talk about permanent damage to the province, it was the legacy you left the taxpayers of this province and the future generations to clean up, a legacy of uncontrolled spending, unchecked reckless spending. You never met a group that you wouldn't promise something to. That's the legacy you left this province. Our government was saddled with an \$11-billion deficit that it takes—

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member take his seat. Order. I cannot hear the answer.

Chair of Management Board.

Hon Mr Hodgson: We were saddled with an \$11-billion deficit and we promised we would get that under control in five years and also have a growth agenda, giving back some money to the people of Ontario, the hardworking people of this province, to restore confidence and get this economy going. I think the results speak for themselves. Ontario is once again leading

Canada in economic growth, record job creation. That's the legacy we want to build upon and a strong economy can provide the services that Ontarians need today and in the future.

The Speaker: The member for Scarborough-Agincourt.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Chair of Management Board, to get from him the government's intention on its cuts. I gather from your comments and from the Premier's comments that you plan over the next two years to cut expenditures by 1%. I gather from the Premier's comments that he believes that's about \$450 million in each of the next two years. I think the people of Ontario would simply like you to confirm that that is the number. If that is not the number, what is the number that you and the Premier are using in terms of implementing this promise to cut 1% of spending over the next two years?

Hon Mr Hodgson: We will live up to our promises made in the Blueprint to look for 1% in savings. The bottom line is that we want to make sure this budget is balanced. Today's announcement will be the first step towards that, with a little bit over \$300 million contributing towards a balanced budget for the next fiscal year, and contributing to make sure that that budget is balanced in the out years. For the exact numbers you'll have to wait for the budget that my colleague the Minister of Finance will deliver.

Mr Phillips: I assume that when you made the promise you had some idea of the number. It's as simple as that. Today you're announcing \$300 million. According to what the Premier said in discussion with the media, the total is going to be \$900 million. Ontario wants to know, are we today seeing one third of what we're going to see? Is that the number? If it isn't, tell us the number. But surely, when you made the promise, you knew the number. Surely you didn't make a promise without costing it and knowing how much you're going to cut. I simply, on behalf of the people of Ontario, want to know where you're taking us. You start us down this road. You're going to cut \$300 million today. The Premier's indicated it's going to be a total of \$900 million. If the Premier did not use the right number, tell us now, today, so that the people watching this who are going to be affected by it have some idea where you plan to lead us.

Hon Mr Hodgson: Where we plan to lead this province is to a balanced budget with its fiscal house restored so that we can attract investment to this province and create more jobs.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): You don't know the answer, do you? "I don't know, I don't know."

Hon Mr Hodgson: To the minister from Windsor, I know one thing: It's fewer dollars than you guys—

The Speaker: Order. Member take his seat. Order. Was the Chair of Management Board done?

Hon Mr Hodgson: Yes.

Mr Phillips: For heaven's sake, you are taking us down a road. You're going to cut \$900 million, apparently. You're going to go out in the hall and you're going

to slash \$300 million and you're going to cut another \$600 million. The auditor couldn't have been clearer: It's going to hurt young people, it's going to hurt our universities, it's going to hurt our education system, it's going to hurt people relying on the family responsibility act. You're going to announce \$300 million in cuts. I want to know today, when you made that promise and when you ran and when you campaigned, what number did you think you would be cutting? What number did the Premier think he was going to be cutting? Is it \$900 million? If it isn't, tell us what it is.

1430

Hon Mr Hodgson: As the finance critic for the Liberal Party, you'd be well aware of what we campaigned on in our Blueprint. Our Blueprint said that we would cut out waste and inefficiencies.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister, take your seat. Order. I cannot hear the answer. I need to hear the answer before we're going to proceed.

Hon Mr Hodgson: You know this full well. In the document that you campaigned on, you said you would cut government spending by more than what we said. We said we would find \$1 in government spending—

The Speaker: The member for Windsor West. I will not warn her again. This is her last warning.

Hon Mr Hodgson: The member opposite knows he can take a look at the assumptions. We want to balance the budget; we will do that. We want to keep it balanced. We said we would look for savings, roughly one cent on every dollar. That's outside of health care and classroom education, to match rising enrolment. You heard the Premier yesterday. He said that's roughly \$450 million, and we will do that in the two years. This is a first step.

The Speaker: New question, leader of the third party.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Education and it's about your government's deception.

The Speaker: I would ask the member to withdraw that comment.

Mr Hampton: Speaker, I have not accused a person of deception. I said the government is being deceptive.

The Speaker: The member will please withdraw the "deception" comment.

Mr Hampton: I withdraw it.

I want to ask how it is your government one week announces that you've got tax subsidies—

Interjections.

The Speaker: I cannot hear the member asking the question.

Mr Hampton: I want to ask the Minister of Education how it is that one week you come forward and announce that you've got tax subsidies for an NHL hockey team and the next week we have to learn from a leaked document that you're going to cut education again. You're going to cut schooling for students with disabilities; cuts to English as a second language; cuts to literacy; cuts to basic skills training; cuts to boards that are already hurting.

Minister, can you explain to people across Ontario how you have money to subsidize NHL hockey teams but you're still going to go out and cut our schools and cut our children. Can you explain that to people?

Hon Mrs Ecker: First of all, I would ask the honourable member to check his facts. We are not providing tax subsidies to hockey teams. Second, we've been very clear with the voters of this province what our objective and our goal is in terms of public education. A good, strong public education system is our goal and that's what our children deserve. As the students said here yesterday, it is their right.

We have said our priority is on classroom spending. That is indeed where our priority is. We've already increased money there. We are prepared to increase money there again.

We are not proposing to cut services for the deaf and blind students, and I really wish the honourable member would stop spreading such rumours.

Mr Hampton: Let me tell the Minister of Education what's already going on in our classrooms. You will no doubt know about something called the Youth News Network. The so-called Youth News Network approaches schools and says to them that if they will allow biased news broadcasts and all kinds of corporate advertising in the school system, they'll make some money available to them. Schools, because they're already short of money for their programs, are buying into this. That's what's already going on, Minister. No matter how you try to disguise it, people know you're going to go out there and cut education again.

If you're really serious about protecting and advancing education, how about getting YNN and its biased view of reality out of our classrooms and replacing that funding with the kind of funding our schools, our classrooms and our children deserved in the first place?

Hon Mrs Ecker: First of all, we have increased funding for textbooks; we've increased funding for computers; we've increased funding for special education students; and we also recognize that we need to continue to do a better job in special ed, for example, as I said yesterday, as I've said many times. We've got more money there than has ever been there before. We have a new policy, which everyone has agreed is the right policy. But we continue to work with boards and parents because we know that it is still not giving the support it should be giving to special education students.

I would also like to say to the honourable member that I believe the trustees in this province, who are elected by their communities, can be trusted to make the right decisions. I would like to ask the honourable member why he does not trust the trustees, elected by their communities, to make the decisions about what is appropriate in their classrooms in regard to any private sector partnerships they may wish to pursue.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): When is this gobbledegook from this minister ever going to end? This minister rejects the facts put forth by the Toronto Star, rejects the facts put forth by our leader. Is she also

going to reject the facts put forth, the tracking that has been done by the People for Education, who have been voluntarily—

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: No, no, you're quite right. We shouldn't trust anybody. Only the Minister of Education is right. We are putting more and more money into education.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member, continue.

Mr Marchese: What arrogant smugness with this government, not just this minister.

They have tracked—voluntarily, unpaid—the problems in the system, the cuts they made to English as a second language, to special education, to education assistants, to specialist assistants, to libraries, to the lack of funding for principals and the diminution of principals and vice-principals. It goes on and on.

This person says we're putting more money—

The Speaker: Member take his seat.

Mr Marchese: How long can you lie?

The Speaker: Order. I would ask the member to withdraw that comment.

Mr Marchese: I withdraw it.

The Speaker: I apologize. I didn't hear it. Sorry. The member, please.

Mr Marchese: I withdraw it.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I appreciate the withdrawal of that unparliamentary comment.

I met with the education group that did that study, and we had a very good meeting. I think that ultimately, if they are able to bring forward comparative data and information, this may well be a helpful report, as are all of the reports that are done by the Education Improvement Commission. It actually showed increased money, money moving out of the bureaucracy, moving into classrooms, which is indeed our goal. They confirmed in their interim report that that is indeed what happened and is happening.

One of the difficulties with this particular report—and as I said, I welcome the input from this group and had met with them—is that there is no comparative data. For example, with textbooks, we have many students, many teachers and many schools that have seen new textbooks this year and last year for the first time because of the increased funding this government has put into textbooks.

Finally, regarding his comment about whom we should believe, I would look forward to that in my next election brochure.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Correctional Services. Minister, it's about the safety of our communities and your plans to privatize jails. Your mega-jails are a recipe for disaster, and they put community safety at risk. You weren't up front with communities when you started

building your mega-jails. You didn't tell them that you were negotiating with Corrections Corp of America, a company notorious for violence and escapes in the prisons it manages in the United States.

Your predecessor before the last election said that you were giving up on the idea of privatizing jails; it was too risky; there were too many unanswered questions. Now that the election is over, you're going back to the idea of privatizing those mega-jails. Don't you worry about communities and their safety? Don't you worry about the horrible record of privatized jails in the United States? Don't you worry about bringing that here?

1440

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister of Correctional Services): I worry about the public safety of our correctional institutions all the time. In fact, that is our ministry's top priority. I worry about whether or not we have institutions in this province that will be able to deliver correctional services to the population that is delivered to us by the judicial system, safely, securely and effectively and efficiently. We worry about that to the point that we are able to make changes and bring forward changes to the corrections institutions in this province. That is why we embarked, in our last mandate, on a program that would renew the infrastructure of the correctional institutions in this province, something that that party over there didn't do when they were in government and something that you, sir, didn't do when you were in government.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Minister, among the jails that you've targeted is the new mega-jail at Penetanguishene. That's the jail where the criminally insane in this province are going to be kept. You're the guru of privatization, and I suspect that you are champing at the bit to get around to our corrections system. But, please, be careful, because you are playing with fire. You'd better take some lessons from the American experience and those communities that have hosted privately run jails—violence within the jails and escapes like never before. Those communities are trying to get rid of their privately run facilities. There won't be any cost savings here but there will be a huge price paid in terms of safety of community and correctional staff.

Your predecessor, Bob Runciman, understood corrections and he understood it well enough to abandon the privatization approach to mega-jails. Why aren't you? What is a life worth to you? What is community safety worth to you?

Hon Mr Sampson: As I said when I responded to the question raised by your leader, community safety is the number one priority of this ministry, and that is why we are going through the infrastructure renewal project in this province, to make sure that we have institutions that are state of the art, that don't jeopardize the security and safety of those within it, whether they be inmates or employees of the institution and this ministry.

The member refers to the new project in Penetang and he leads this House to believe that that's the project that will be housing the criminally insane. That is not correct

and he knows that. I say to the member opposite and the other members, if they want to raise these facts in the House, why don't you make them true facts?

CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. We know that under your watch, provincial parks in this province are now up for sale, such as Bronte Creek. We also now see another dramatic impact as a result of your funding cuts. You have cut the budgets of conservation authorities across Ontario by over 70%, with much more to come, I know, in your future cuts that have been talked about today.

We now know that the Hamilton Region Conservation Authority has asked for proposals to sell drinking water to private bottled water companies. This water will be drawn from the Dundas Valley park. Clearly, Minister, you are now forcing conservation authorities to sell water to the private sector in order to try to carry out its programs. We think this is a dangerous precedent. We think this is drawing upon one of our greatest natural resources in this province. We have made it very clear on this side of the House that we do not believe that water and our natural resources are up for sale to the private sector or to the highest bidder. You have forced them to do that.

Minister, can you today commit to restoring the funding that you have cut to the conservation authorities and also to bring in legislation that will prohibit conservation authorities from across Ontario from selling off water to the private sector?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): I can say this: We have continued to fund conservation authorities across this province.

I think the member opposite would know that these conservation authorities have been around since 1954 to do work on flood control in those areas, and we share that responsibility and the funding responsibility with the municipalities. We have over the last few years had a series of partnerships with conservation authorities that have led to additional lands being protected and to increasing the amount of activities that those conservation authorities do.

I can tell the member opposite, I can assure him today, that we will continue to fund conservation authorities, that we will continue to make sure they can do their primary job, which is flood control in this province.

Mr Agostino: I'm amazed the minister says that you continue to fund them. You've cut their budgets by over 70% in the last five years—over 70% to their budgets. You basically have slashed their budgets. You're now forcing this. This proposal is the first time a public body in Ontario has turned to groundwater as a revenue-producing resource. You don't seem to understand that. Your answer, Minister, totally ignored the key part of this question: Do you believe in the principle and the concept of a conservation authority selling its groundwater to the private sector?

This is really the principle that's at stake here today. It opens the door to any other conservation authority to do this, some of which are responsible for flood control in Ontario. It now sets a dangerous precedent, if you allow this to happen, with regard to how and why we have conservation authorities, and more importantly, with regard to water and the resource it is and the principle we have that water is not for sale to the highest bidder.

Minister, I ask you again very clearly today: Will you commit to bringing in legislation that would prohibit conservation authorities across Ontario from selling off their water?

Hon Mr Snobelen: First, I want to make very clear that I haven't seen this proposal. It hasn't come to me. I haven't had a chance to examine it in any way, shape or form, so that's first. Second, in the area of funding of conservation authorities, I think it's interesting to note how some conservation authorities have changed in their partnerships and the way they do business over the course of the last few years. The Toronto Region Conservation Authority, for instance, has a budget of some \$32 million a year, of which \$2 million comes from the provincial government; the rest is from partnerships.

I think the member opposite would know from previous answers in the House that a drawing permit for large quantities of water must be obtained from my colleague the Minister of the Environment, and I am sure if he'd direct a question on those sorts of issues to my colleague, he'd be more than happy to answer.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth-Burlington): My question is for the Minister of Labour. A week ago you promised unions in Windsor that you would be bringing in more stringent limits for exposure to metalworking fluids. However, yesterday the Ontario Federation of Labour issued a press release alleging that you broke your promise and excluded these fluids in your announcement to update occupational exposure limits.

You will recall that back four years ago, when you were labelled as a rebel and I was labelled as a rebel-in-training, we had many talks on the importance of keeping your word, on a promise made being a promise kept.

My question is, do you still believe in those words? Do you intend to go back on your promise to reduce workplace toxins?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): Thank you for the question. You've learned well.

We announced the OELs on Tuesday, the 213 substances that are now covered. I think the concern they had and the request they made was that there was going to be limits put on metalworking fluids. We agreed with those terms and conditions.

That fact of the matter remains that at this point in time, the American Conference of Government Industrial Hygienists promised to review the subset, and it has not yet been adopted. When that subset has been approved at

that level, we will be happy to comply. We will continue to comply with the new subset levels.

I will also say, I give them the undertaking that we will uphold to commit to never fall behind again and to putting a process in place that will continue updating these exposure limits.

Mr Skarica: Thank you for the clarification and the compliment, I think. Occupational disease is obviously a terrible tragedy that haunts many working people and their families. I commend your ministry for moving to update those exposure limits for hazardous chemical substances, something we know something about in Hamilton.

However, the OFL claims that the process your ministry is using is seriously flawed, is secretive and makes it too easy for employers to establish using false information that implementation of the various proposed limits will be too costly.

Minister, will the process you have adopted actually work to uphold the government's commitment to prevent occupational illness and injury? Are you going to take occupational illnesses seriously?

Hon Mr Stockwell: We have informed the industries out there that they have a 90-day period to conform with respect to the new OELs. They're forced to conform within 90 days. If they're having very difficult restrictions put upon them etc, we will sit down with them and work out a timetable for them to conform. I think it's a reasonable and responsible approach.

Ideally, here, I know the industries are working with the workers, the unions etc, everyone involved, to develop guidelines that are reasoned and thoughtful and are safe to work in. We put that position out very clearly to the employers; we said the same thing to the unions and the employees. We have put a 90-day period on. But I'll tell you flat out, the fact is these are going to be lived up to. The employers must live up to them, because it's reasoned and thoughtful and acceptable legislation adopted by what I consider to be thoughtful and reasonable people on both sides. They have teeth; they will be lived up to. That's the undertaking of this government. I will commit to it.

1450

MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question for the Minister of the Environment this afternoon. The Minister of the Environment, of course, is the individual in the House who is preoccupied with engineering a takeover of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada by the Reform Party of Canada and is being quite successful, obviously. He is now applying the Reform Party principles to the Ministry of the Environment.

Your government has already slashed the operating budget of your ministry by some 42%, the capital budget of your ministry by 93% and the staff by over one third. Those are the devastating cuts which have already taken place in the Ministry of the Environment: compliance

and enforcement branch, cut by 30%; prosecution staff, slashed by more than half; the number of water monitoring stations has fallen from nearly 700 to just over 200; a 40% reduction in laboratory services; regional offices completely annihilated.

Minister, your ministry, for which you have responsibility, the Ministry of the Environment, cannot afford further cuts. Will you assure members of this House that the boots will not be put to your ministry in the form of even more cuts to a ministry that has already been devastated by the Premier?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I would disagree with the honourable member's characterization. We are a government that believes we can deliver better services at less cost to the taxpayer. That's our duty and responsibility, and we do not flinch from that. That means some difficult but necessary decisions have to be made, but we believe we can do that and still be very committed to the principles that Ontarians feel very strongly about, including environmental protection, cleaner air, cleaner soil and cleaner water.

I quite frankly have been very pleased with the progress of the ministry in doing better for less, in keeping up to date in scientific methodology, up to date in management so they can protect the things that need to be protected in a way that is more modern and more cost-sensitive.

In answer to the honourable member's question—because he has a serious question here—yes, I can commit that there are no further cuts to my ministry that will affect the front-line services of our ministry.

Mr Bradley: The weasel words came at the end of that particular statement. It was the Minister of the Environment speaking, but the voice sounded very much like Preston Manning on the policy.

Here is what Eva Ligeti said. Eva Ligeti was the independent Environmental Commissioner in Ontario. She's the person you fired when she criticized you, the way you fire everybody else who criticizes the government. She said:

"Less government in this case means less enforcement and less environmental protection. In order to maintain the semblance of environmental protection, ministry officials have resorted to describing the co-benefits of existing programs, attempting to involve industry in voluntary measures and transferring responsibility for environmental decisions to municipalities. The ministries have yet to produce credible information to demonstrate that these strategies are adequate to deal with existing environmental problems."

Minister, will you submit to the Premier of this province your resignation if he continues to gut, dismantle, pillage, ravage and eliminate in effectiveness the Ministry of Environment of Ontario?

Hon Mr Clement: Thank goodness the honourable member's characterization is not the correct characterization of what is going on here. We have a Ministry of the Environment that is still very much committed to

protecting our soil, to protecting our air, to protecting our water. In fact, they are doing their job very well.

Do there have to be improvements? Absolutely, there have to be improvements all across the line. That is something I am committed to, and I know the honourable member, when he was environment minister, was committed to always continually improving—at least, that's what the rhetoric was. We always have a better job to do.

But I will say this, and if he is worried about weasel words, I will say this without qualification: There are no cuts to staff; there are no cuts to programs; there are no cuts to the front line; there are no cuts to administration. There are no cuts.

There is a ministry that is going to be doing better and better to make sure that we have a better environment for our children, a better environment for our grandchildren and something that we can be proud of in the province of Ontario. That is my commitment and that is the Premier's commitment.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It is my privilege to ask a question of the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. I recently read in a report of the Ontario Association of Colleges of Applied Art and Technology that they are expecting a significant jump in the enrolment in the coming years. My constituents in Durham have spoken of the double cohort as well. I found it interesting, however, during my research that in the past decade colleges have seen a 33% increase in enrolment. I think this reflects well on the programs and the accessibility of post-secondary education.

Increasingly, enrolment in the greater Toronto area, especially in my riding of Durham, because of the growth, is an important and timely issue. Can you tell me in the House today what you are doing to help post-secondary institutions in Ontario, not just in Durham perhaps, with the increased enrolment expected?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I would like to thank the member, my colleague from Durham, for the question.

Our government is committed, as everyone knows, to ensuring that there will be a place for every qualified and motivated student in our post-secondary education system. This is a really exciting time in Ontario. We're looking at some 88,000 new students in the next decade and I believe that the first priority of the government should be to get the buildings up. As my friends in the opposition understand, it takes a long time to build these college and university facilities so we did announce and we have committed \$742 million this year alone to accommodate the expected increase in enrolment beginning in the year 2003.

We are working in partnership with the colleges and universities to plan for this increased demand and I can only assure you that we will indeed provide accessible and quality education to each and every one of them.

Mr O'Toole: I know that every student in Ontario feels much relieved with that response, as well as the president of Durham College, Gary Polonsky, and Terry Hing, the board of governors chair. I know they are appreciatively awaiting that kind of response.

Minister, as you just explained, in the 1999 budget our government announced that we would invest \$742 million to expand capacity and modernize Ontario colleges and universities. I understand you recently had a proposal under the funding to help build and modernize the infrastructure. Can you please share with me and the House the details about the SuperBuild Growth Fund as well as the criteria upon which the projects have been judged.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: For the members of this Legislative Assembly, in case they are asked these questions, we know now that the post-secondary sector, because of the demand and the need for the planning that goes on—we can advise our college presidents, our university presidents, our student associations and our communities that indeed we will be receiving money from the SuperBuild Growth Fund this year.

We did think long and hard about what the criteria should be and the first criterion is, the universities and colleges, in their planning, must tell us how many more students they will be able to accommodate for this growth. So that's the first criterion. The second criterion is, who are they working with, who are their partners?

Interjections.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: No, many of them are working with the private sector or their own municipalities. They are working to help expand financially. They must demonstrate—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Minister, take your seat. Your time has expired.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES

M. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): J'ai une question pour le ministre de l'Office des affaires francophones.

Monsieur le ministre, TFO a appris hier que le fonds de développement économique de l'Office des affaires francophones avait disparu dans la vague de coupures de votre gouvernement, également, que les programmes d'éducation continue pour les francophones seraient coupés et que l'éducation en français n'est pas une priorité pour ce gouvernement.

C'est aujourd'hui le 10^e anniversaire de la Loi sur les services en français. Allez-vous prendre cette occasion pour défendre ces importants programmes auprès du Conseil de gestion ?

L'hon John R. Baird (ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones): C'est mon plaisir de répondre à cette question.

Il est très important pour la population francophone, comme pour toute la province, que notre gouvernement

équilibre le budget. Pendant ce processus, bien sûr, il y a beaucoup de décisions qui sont difficiles ; les décisions ne sont jamais faciles.

Dans ce cas, l'Office des affaires francophones doit faire partie de la solution. L'Office des affaires francophones doit être, comme tous les autres ministères, une partie de la solution. C'est important pour nous et c'est important pour les francophones que le budget soit équilibré pour qu'on puisse créer une province où le secteur privé continuera à créer des emplois pour toutes les personnes dans la province.

M. Hampton : Alors, toutes les questions ne sont pas importantes pour votre gouvernement.

Voilà deux semaines, nous avons appris que votre gouvernement allait couper la subvention du collège agricole d'Alfred. Vous avez ensuite rencontré le directeur du collège, qui vous a expliqué que cela obligerait le collège à fermer.

Pouvez-vous maintenant nous assurer que vous ne fermerez pas le collège d'Alfred ?

L'hon M. Baird : Je veux transférer cette question à mon collègue le ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales.

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I just want to point out to the member opposite that the government is very committed to providing education to the farming community in Ontario, and that goes for all the farmers in Ontario, not just the English-speaking. We are very committed to making sure that we provide francophone education for those agriculturalists, particularly in eastern Ontario. We will be looking at finding ways to make sure we provide the most cost-effective education for those people under the present structure.

At present, college education is all funded through an agreement we have with the University of Guelph, and they provide it in Alfred College and in Kemptonville, Guelph and Ridgeway. We will be having discussions with the university as to the best possible way to provide francophone education for the farmers in Ontario.

1500

M^{me} Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier) : Ma question s'adresse au ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones.

Hier, ici dans l'Assemblée, nous avons parlé, vous et moi, de la Loi sur les services en français, pierre d'assise pour la communauté franco-ontarienne. Tandis que vous avez souligné les gains de la communauté, moi, j'ai souligné les menaces aux quelques services et programmes disponibles en français. Il y a une menace importante qui plane sur la communauté. C'est la menace de coupures budgétaires néfastes. L'accès aux soins de santé en français, à l'éducation en français, aux services sociaux et communautaires en français, et aux services gouvernementaux en français est menacé, tout ce qu'il y a de plus fondamental pour assurer la survie de notre communauté.

Nous avons, monsieur le ministre, quelques institutions clés qui nous livrent les services de programmes en

français, des institutions comme l'hôpital Montfort, le collège d'Alfred, l'Office des affaires francophones, des institutions en Ontario.

En cette journée du 10^e anniversaire de la mise en oeuvre de la Loi 8, pouvez-vous assurer la communauté francophone ontarienne qu'il n'y aura pas de coupures budgétaires qui menaceront l'existence même de nos institutions ?

L'hon M. Baird : Au début de ma réponse, je veux féliciter ma chère collègue, la députée d'Ottawa-Vanier, de son élection et de sa nomination comme porte-parole pour les Affaires francophones dans son parti politique. C'est une bonne occasion pour moi de travailler avec elle pour le bénéfice de tous les citoyens de la province.

Une grande priorité pour notre gouvernement, c'est de créer un environnement où le secteur privé peut créer des emplois, et c'est absolument essentiel qu'on équilibre le budget de la province. Pendant ce processus, qui n'est pas, bien sûr un processus très simple, on doit travailler très fort et prendre des décisions difficiles de temps en temps. Il est très important, pas seulement pour la province mais pour la communauté francophone, qu'on équilibre le budget, et d'être sûr que le secteur puisse créer les emplois pour l'avenir.

M^{me} Boyer : Monsieur le ministre, écoutez-moi. L'Office des affaires francophones est le moteur pour l'accès aux services gouvernementaux en français. Sa capacité de remplir son mandat—et j'ai eu plusieurs appels sur ça—est menacée.

Pouvez-vous, encore une fois, assurer les Franco-Ontariens et les Franco-Ontariennes qu'il n'y aura pas de coupures au maigre budget de l'Office des affaires francophones ?

L'hon M. Baird : C'est très important pour notre gouvernement de fournir les services en français, les services de qualité dans toutes les régions de la province, et dans les 23 régions désignées. C'est quelque chose qui est très important pour moi. C'est très important pour notre gouvernement.

Une des plus grandes choses qu'on puisse faire pour être sûr que la communauté franco-ontarienne continuera à travailler, c'est l'éducation en français. C'est notre gouvernement qui a créé 12 nouveaux conseils scolaires partout dans la province pour desservir la population franco-ontarienne. C'est notre gouvernement, pour la première fois dans l'histoire de la province, qui a une politique de l'équité dans le financement de l'éducation. Maintenant, chaque étudiant dans chaque partie de la province reçoit la même somme d'argent pour son éducation.

Ce sont deux grands exemples de la priorité qu'on accorde à la communauté francophone, une grande partie de la population de l'Ontario.

AIR QUALITY

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): My question today is for the Minister of the Environment. In a riding that borders on the natural wonder that is the

Rouge Valley Park, it should come as no surprise to you that environmental issues are of great importance to my constituents of Scarborough Centre. That is why I am pleased that our government is working on a plan that deals with air pollution and smog reduction.

However, it concerns me to hear that half of our smog originates in the United States. With our government's continued commitment to smog reduction, how do we combat pollution that we don't even have the power to regulate?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the honourable member from Scarborough Centre for the question. I want to assure the member and all members of this House that we are committed to protecting Ontario's air quality and we are aggressively tackling those issues.

The member is correct. No matter how hard we work here in Ontario, 50% of our smog does in fact originate from the United States and travel across their borders and our borders into Ontario. So we are examining all options, of course, to work together with our American friends on the bordering states to Ontario.

But I'd like to let the member know that we have requested and received intervenor status into a US court proceeding to support the United States' Environmental Protection Agency's nitrogen oxide state implementation plan. That is a plan that is going to reduce pollution in about 23 states. I can update this House that on November 9, our government made oral presentations to the court proceedings where we brought to the attention of the court the fact that NO_x emissions from the US contribute to ozone layers in southwestern Ontario. We're the only non-US agency that is heard in this appeal, and we are promoting those essential issues in the United States.

Ms Mushinski: I'm pleased to see, Minister, that you're taking the whole issue of air pollution and smog reduction seriously.

Are there any other initiatives that you can inform this House about that the government is undertaking to ensure the continued reduction of air pollution and smog in this province?

Hon Mr Clement: That's an important point, because we cannot just rely on the United States, even though that is the cause of 50% of our smog. We have to lead by example as well. I can tell the honourable member that we are in fact doing that.

Since 1996, our air quality index readings have been in the "good" to "very good" category 95% of the time. That percentage has been steadily increasing.

We also have Ontario's anti-smog action plan, which is an ambitious initiative to cut the smog-producing agents in our atmosphere by 25% by the year 2005 and by 45% by the year 2015. This is a coalition effort. This is an effort on behalf of the government, on behalf of the industry, on behalf of the NGOs. We have also, obviously, led by example with Ontario's Drive Clean program, which is the most comprehensive program of its

kind in North America. That is designed to reduce vehicle emissions by 22%.

I can assure this House that this government continues to be committed to the improvement—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Member's time.

1510

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP,
CULTURE AND RECREATION

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a question to the Minister of Citizenship. It concerns the deep cuts to programs that are essentially in that ministry.

As you know, you have already cut deep into important programs to newcomers to our province who want nothing more than to contribute to Ontario's economy and enter the workforce. You have cut programs such as information books on how to access jobs and enter trades and professions. You've cut the Ontario welcome houses. We used to have one right here on University Avenue. You remember that one. You've cut international language programs. Now, you're utterly destroying a basic and essential program, English literacy or English-language education, which is designed as a basic tool to enter the workforce.

Minister, why would you want to decimate this English literacy program and balance your budget at the expense of newcomers who need this program to get a job? If you don't intend to cut it, stand up right now and say you don't intend to cut it.

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): May I say, first of all, that was a very strange question. It sounded like I was cutting and it sounded like I wasn't cutting. Let me say one thing. There is no question that since I've been at the Ministry of Citizenship we've looked at all programs to ensure that they're working well for the people of Ontario. I've looked at them to ensure that they're working for the needs of newcomers in Ontario. I'm committed to making sure that every program in the Ministry of Citizenship works well for newcomers to the province.

Mr Ruprecht: I didn't get the answer to my question. I think you're describing the program of the ministry, but not the answer to my question. Let me ask it again. Let me ask it from the beginning. If you don't intend to cut this program, then why don't you get up and simply say, "You know what, Mr Ruprecht, I don't intend to cut this program"? Stop this gobbledegook, because that's what you're doing.

You seem to be hell-bent on destroying the infrastructure to services to immigrants. These immigrants want to settle here. They wish to participate in our economy. They don't want to be on welfare. They want jobs. To get jobs, one of the most essential services your ministry can supply is to ensure that there are English-speaking services and English-speaking programs.

Minister, just do us one favour, please. Stand up and simply say clearly to the people of Ontario, who want to

know from you today, are you going to cut this program or are you going to give us some more gobbledegook?

Hon Mrs Johns: I am baffled by this question because if the member opposite feels so strongly about newcomer services, you think he would talk to his federal cousins and make sure that they settle the problem with immigration. I suggest that he call someone he knows in Ottawa right now and ask them why don't they settle with the last province, Ontario, in making sure that dollars come to where they rightfully are deserved.

IMMIGRANT SPONSORSHIP

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. There are a large number of constituents in my riding of Scarborough Southwest who are concerned about the issue of deadbeat sponsors. Minister, deadbeat sponsors, by shirking their agreement and walking away from agreements they have made with the federal government regarding immigration, are leaving the taxpayers of our province on the hook. I also understand that it is the federal government's responsibility to enforce sponsorship agreements and that by allowing deadbeat sponsors to walk away from these agreements, the federal government is placing a burden of more than \$100 million on the backs of the taxpayers of our province. On top of this, I also understand that the federal government allows welfare recipients to become immigrant sponsors.

Minister, there is one point I'm not clear on: The Chrétien Liberals claim that they are already covering the additional costs to our welfare tabs through the Canada health and social transfer. If the Chrétien Liberals are already picking up the bill, why are you asking for more money?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I want to say at the outset that this government and people in the province of Ontario strongly support immigration. Our province has benefited tremendously, socially, culturally and economically, as a result of the benefit that immigrants have brought to this province.

We are concerned as a government and municipalities are concerned, as taxpayers are, about the large number of deadbeat sponsors, people who accept to undertake obligations to care for people coming to Canada searching for a better life, but we are concerned that 17,000 sponsored immigrants are allowed into Canada. The federal government sets the criteria on who can sponsor an immigrant. The federal government then signs these sponsorship agreements, and their lack of living up to the responsibility is costing taxpayers in Ontario more \$100 million a year. That's a burden that Ontario taxpayers face, that Toronto and Peel taxpayers face disproportionately. We're calling on the federal government to accept their responsibilities and stand up for Ontario.

Mr Newman: My supplementary is to the same minister. The people of my riding of Scarborough Southwest and across Ontario are obviously concerned about how

taxpayer dollars are best spent. After all, our government was re-elected in part due to its promise of making government more accountable to taxpayers. So it's understandable that constituents in my riding are very concerned about this issue, and I join them in that concern.

When someone agrees to be a sponsor, the federal government approves the application, that sponsor bears all financial responsibility for that person for a 10-year period. They specifically commit to that person that they are responsible and will not go on social assistance. Yet the federal government continues to allow this very thing to happen.

Minister, how is it that the taxpayers in Ontario and in my riding of Scarborough Southwest have to foot the bill for the Chrétien Liberals and its deadbeat sponsors?

Hon Mr Baird: I share the concern that the member's constituents obviously have. I share the concern that Mayor Lastman and Peel region are bringing to the table. It is a concern that the federal government is refusing to step up to the plate and accept their responsibility.

The criteria that they have established for sponsorship are lax. The fact that they sign these sponsorship agreements and then fail to live up to the responsibility is a real concern for me. But for the federal government and the federal Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to stand up and say that all immigrants and refugees are part of the calculation of the CHST funding is absolutely outrageous.

When this government was fighting Ottawa to get Ontario's fair share of health spending, the federal government was very clear: They wanted an ironclad agreement from this government to spend each and every cent of that new money on health care. Every Premier in Canada signs a letter promising to spend every new dollar on health care. Then the Prime Minister, Jean Chrétien, said, "I welcome the important commitments using all of this increase on health spending." We're not—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Minister, take a seat. It's time.

1520

GOVERNMENT FACILITIES

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): My question is for the Chair of Management Board. Yesterday I asked you not to close the Roberta Bondar place in Sault Ste Marie, and you told me that you would pass my concerns on to the Ontario Realty Corp. I hope they listen.

Today, I am raising with you the spectre of at least two other closures or sell-offs in Sault Ste Marie, the bush plane museum—you've been there; the Minister of Natural Resources spoke about it here last week; you know how important that is in terms of tourism and the future of the Sault—and the Ontario Forest Research Institute, a first-class research institute in Sault Ste Marie that represents a future in that area for our community.

All of these facilities are one-time hits. You and your benefactors and rich friends are like junkies: high on the largesse of your tax breaks, paid for by the loss of

services and these one-time hits. There's no future vision here. Minister, will you tell the Ontario Realty Corp to take these facilities off the list?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Thank you for the opportunity to clarify the record. I understood your concern yesterday was that you keep the name of the Roberta Bondar Centre. I passed on that concern to the Ontario Realty Corp, that if they determine it makes sense to sell this building, they would explore the possibility of keeping the name attached to the building.

In regard to your broader question, of course I've been to the bushplane museum. It's one of the great attractions of Sault Ste Marie. We helped fund it through the heritage fund.

By doing a business case analysis, realizing that we don't need to own the assets to deliver the service, we'll free up more dollars for health care, education and maybe even some cultural attractions that remind us of our glorious past in the MNR like the bushplane museum. It's only by taking these assets and looking at them seriously to determine whether we need to own them or not to deliver the program that we'll have the dollars available to do those kinds of worthwhile projects.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding the estimates committee.

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

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): I move that notwithstanding standing order 62(a), the standing committee on estimates shall present one report with respect to all estimates and supplementary estimates considered pursuant to standing orders 59 and 61 no later than December 2, 1999, and that all other sections of standing order 62 shall apply to the December 2, 1999, reporting date.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Mr Sterling has moved that—

Interjection: Dispense.

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

PETITIONS

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I keep receiving petitions to reopen the hospital emergency wards in the west end of Toronto. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the residents in the west end of Toronto no longer have emergency room service at the Humber River Regional Hospital, formerly known as Northwestern Hospital, the Keele Street site; and

"Whereas the west end of Toronto is the hardest-hit area for emergency restrictions in all of Toronto; and

"Whereas Premier Mike Harris and Minister of Health Elizabeth Witmer have promised changes to deliver a solution to the mess they initially created by closing hospitals; and

"Whereas it is not acceptable to Toronto residents that every one of the eight emergency room departments in the city's west end were closed on Monday, January 22, 1999;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, call on Premier Mike Harris and his government to immediately address the health care problems in the west end of Toronto by re-opening the emergency room at the Northwestern hospital, now known as the Humber River Regional Hospital's Keele Street site, and increase the number of in-patient hospital beds and keep its promise for interim long-term-care beds."

Since I agree with this petition wholeheartedly, I'm signing it as such.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I will sign this so that it is properly made a record of this assembly.

HENLEY ROWING COURSE

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition that 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 of 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 the sentiments expressed in this petition.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Brian Coburn (Carleton-Gloucester): I have a petition wherein 4,200 residents of the city of Gloucester and the city of Cumberland have affixed their names.

"We, the undersigned, do not support one big-city government or bigger regional government in Ottawa-Carleton. Bigger is not better. It moves governance away from the people. We want the government to be streamlined, efficient, accessible, accountable, flexible, affordable and respectful of community interests and services delivered at the level closest to the people.

"We request the Premier and Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to consider other models of governance, with one set of elected representatives, with a reduced number of cities which best meets the needs and respects the uniqueness of our community interest across the region."

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): As you know, this year the city of Toronto school board has closed 10

public schools and is set to make the announcement at the end of November to close 10 more. This petition is very appropriate. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

I'm in total agreement with this petition and I'm signing it as such to make it valid.

1530

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 8, An Act to promote safety in Ontario by prohibiting aggressive solicitation, solicitation of persons in certain places and disposal of dangerous things in certain places, and to amend the Highway Traffic Act to regulate certain activities on roadways, when Bill 8 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment, and at such time, the bill shall be ordered to the standing committee on justice and social policy; and

That no deferral of the second reading vote pursuant to standing order 28(h) shall be permitted; and

That the standing committee on justice and social policy shall be authorized to meet at any time during its regularly scheduled meeting times as deemed necessary by the committee; and

That, pursuant to standing order 75(c), the Chair of the standing committee on justice and social policy shall establish a deadline for the tabling of amendments or for filing them with the clerk of the committee; and

That the committee be authorized to meet beyond its normal hour of adjournment on the final day until completion of clause-by-clause consideration; and

That, at 4:30 pm on the final day designated by the committee for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill and not later than November 30, 1999, those amendments which have not been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill, and any amendments thereto. Any division required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 127(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House not later than the first sessional day that reports from committees may be received following the completion of clause-by-clause consideration, and not later than December 1, 1999. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on the date provided, the bill shall be deemed to have been passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House;

That upon receiving the report of the standing committee on justice and social policy, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading;

That, when the order for third reading is called, the remainder of the sessional day shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill. At the end of such time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment;

That, the vote on third reading may, pursuant to standing order 28(h), be deferred until the next sessional day during the routine proceeding "Deferred Votes"; and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the divisional bell shall be limited to five minutes.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): Our government introduced Bill 8 for three reasons: first of all, to respond to concerns raised by the people of Ontario about activities that interfere with the safe use of roads, sidewalks, parks—activities such as squeegeeing and aggressive solicitation; secondly, to respond to police concerns about not having the tools to deal effectively with these activities; and thirdly, to keep our promise, made in the Blueprint and again in the throne speech, to make Ontario a safe place for families and individuals, for everyone in Ontario.

By proposing to make commercial activities such as squeegeeing on our roadways an offence under the Highway Traffic Act, we are helping to make the streets

safer for drivers, passengers and pedestrians, and reduce traffic hazards.

By proposing to create new offences for aggressive solicitation and solicitation in places where people cannot easily walk away, we are asserting people's right to use streets and sidewalks in a safe and secure manner without being apprehensive.

By proposing to make it illegal to throw broken glass, syringes and used condoms in neighbourhood parks, we are saying that children and families deserve to safely enjoy outdoor spaces.

Bill 8 is about protecting community life by protecting people's ability to use public places in safety and security. The Safe Streets Act is about enhancing quality of life in our province. When a person, young or elderly, can enter a store without being blocked by someone aggressively soliciting, we have quality of life in Ontario. When parents can pull up in the car at an intersection with the children in the back seat and not feel worried about being approached by someone selling a service with a squeegee, to perform unwanted services, we have quality of life in Ontario.

Police in Ontario have a duty to serve and protect the safe use of community spaces. When existing tools are inadequate to crack down on unsafe behaviour, police have the right to ask the province for help, and we have an obligation to respond. That is what being a responsible government is about; that is what leadership is about.

Our government has proposed in Bill 8 to give police arrest powers for the new offences created under the Safe Streets Act. We want to help officers deal more effectively with complaints they receive from residents and business people about these activities. We have proposed giving the courts a range of options for sentencing convicted offenders, including jail time for repeat offenders. We want to send a strong message that unsafe behaviour on the streets of Ontario will not be tolerated.

We know that there are complex issues around the circumstances of people who engage in activities like squeegeeing, aggressive solicitation and disposing of dangerous objects in parks and laneways. However, help is available, and always has been, from the province. Ministries allocate billions of dollars every year on social programs such as youth and adult employment programs, including apprenticeships, job training, literacy programs, initiatives to help get homeless people into housing and to prevent more people from becoming homeless and, for those who need it, mental health treatment programs at the community level and through the justice system. There are alternatives, there are options, and there is the prospect for a better future.

Bill 8, the Safe Streets Act, is intended to regulate conduct that interferes with people's ability to use public places safely. The bill is intended to enhance quality of life in communities for everyone in those communities. It is one element of our broad effort to make our towns and our cities safer places to live and raise families. The people of Ontario have the right to be safe and to feel safe in their own communities.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Further debate.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak. Unfortunately, I'm speaking on yet another time allocation motion, or, as the people at home should know, another motion which closes off the debate in this Legislative Assembly on yet another piece of legislation. This has become a habit of this government. I guess one could say—although in the opposition, one never says this—that one could at least understand if the government were to try to limit debate on legislation if the government sat for a long period of time and saw that its legislation was not moving. However, the tactic of this government is quite simple: They never have the House in session at appropriate times, and then they bring the House into session late and try to jam everything through at once so there's as little debate as possible on major pieces of legislation—though I don't know if I could call this major—or at least on a controversial piece of legislation.

1540

Yesterday afternoon, I was up in this House once again discussing an issue which was a time allocation motion and nothing else but a time allocation motion.

The best legislation comes forward, obviously, with any government, when there's an appropriate time for debate. In the end, we recognize that the government has been elected with a majority of members and therefore the government is going to certainly have its opportunity to pass its legislation. If the democratic process were to work appropriately, however, we would require a sufficient amount of debate to canvass all the issues, to have the public at home and the members of the news media, who are now filling the press gallery today, listen to this debate and be able to determine whether there are improvements that could be made to the legislation or indeed whether the legislation should be withdrawn. Instead, what we have, of course, is the government once again putting the boots to the opposition and shoving its bill through the Legislature. This is not healthy for democracy.

The member for Niagara Centre and I were chatting with a classroom at Sir Winston Churchill Secondary School. There are a couple of classes from there who are visiting today. Sir Winston Churchill is physically located in the constituency of Niagara Centre, represented by Mr Kormos, and a number of the students reside in the provincial constituency of St Catharines, which I represent.

One of the things we mentioned to the students—they had only a chance to see the private members' hour this morning when they were in the gallery. They didn't see very many members, by the way, at that time, but there was an explanation of what happens, where other members might be or what the degree of interest might be in a particular piece of legislation. But what we both indicated to the group that was in today was the diminishing of the role of the elected representative in the Legislative Assembly and how they should be vigilant—because

Heaven knows the news media will not be vigilant about this—about the fact that so little attention is being paid to the democratic process as it should be.

There are people over there who are involved in big business and small business. I don't believe that a small business or a big business should have its decision-making process as the Legislature does; it wouldn't make sense. It's a different milieu; it's a different circumstance. While I believe you can apply some business practices to government and that could be beneficial, I do not believe that the decision-making process should be the same, because we live in a democracy.

This democracy, almost on a monthly basis, is eroded with more and new rules designed to make the Legislature more efficient. If my staff were watching this at the present time, they would bring me the column in the Hill Times by Dalton Camp which deals with this very matter. Dalton Camp wrote a recent column which described the Harris administration. Dalton Camp, by the way, used to be the chief guru of the federal Progressive Conservative Party, a very highly respected individual in journalistic circles, and certainly in Conservative circles. He was in fact an adviser to prime ministers and well known within the party, an astute and perceptive observer of what is happening across our country today and the author of a book entitled *Whose Country is this Anyway?*

He observed that every government wants to be dictatorial in one way or another, and there are varying degrees. I don't compare this government with the most dictatorial governments. I'm not unfair enough to do that, obviously, and it would be inaccurate. But he said that every government that wants to have a dictatorial circumstance uses the same argument, that the legislative branch must be more efficient.

I heard somebody who had won an election in another country in the world saying that the other day, that one thing that person was going to do was make their Legislature more efficient, more responsive to the executive branch.

Unfortunately—and it is our British system; I understand that—in this Assembly, all power is located in the hands of the Premier's office. These were the whiz kids who got the 30% increase in pay. In fact, they're making more money than most members of the Legislature. Even though many of the members have an additional stipend for additional duties or responsibilities they have on the government side, still the whiz kids make more money. The backroom men and women in the Premier's office make more money than many members of the Legislature and in fact have more power, when it comes down to it.

When you keep taking away from elected members, their ability to influence the decision-making process, then you diminish this House and you diminish the reason for all of us who are elected to this Assembly.

Now, it's difficult on the government side for those who know they are never going to be in the cabinet and do not want to ingratiate themselves with the Premier. Those people tend to be a little more objective and understand these issues. For those who want to grovel at

the feet of the Premier so that they can be in the cabinet, those who would be in great danger of a collision if the Premier stopped quickly in his tracks, those people of course will accept the fact that the executive branch of this government is all powerful.

I have been in this institution since 1977—the member for Etobicoke-North will say far too long—and I have witnessed that erosion of the role and responsibility of members of this Assembly. I well remember Bill Davis. Bill Davis understood democracy. He understood that you had to have appropriate debates in the Assembly. He knew that the Legislature should be in session so that bills could be carefully scrutinized and analyzed. He knew that there should be sufficient committee time to be able to have public input.

Those were the days when the Conservative party was responsive to the public, where it wasn't the captive of a small group of right-wing ideologues who worship at the altar of the Republican Party in the southern states of the United States. Those were the days of the Davis Conservatives, the likes of Bob Welch, a wonderful representative for Lincoln and St Catharines-Brock and Brock ridings, whose granddaughter, by the way, Katherine Kerley, was here today visiting the Legislative Assembly with the group from Sir Winston Churchill Secondary School.

Bob was a moderate. Yes, he was a Conservative. He was a cautious individual, he wanted to make sure that the dollars and cents were appropriately counted, but he was a person in this assembly as Deputy Premier and having held most of the posts in the government, an individual who had a great deal of respect for the democratic process.

I think of people such as Tom Wells and now His Honour Judge McMurtry, Roy McMurtry, people of that ilk. They were very responsive to the will of the people of Ontario. I disagreed with them from time to time, I want to tell you that, but I respected the fact that they allowed for debate and discussion, that they didn't stomp on the opposition as we have seen the opposition stomped on by this government.

It all began with Bill 26. The member for Niagara Falls today brought in a resolution which called for the invoking of Bill 26, and the people who are part of the medical profession who were concerned about Bill 26 thought, "Isn't this something to be concerned about?" I agreed with the medical doctors at that time, and there was no question that they had reason to be worried, because today the member for Niagara Falls—by the way, putting forward an issue that deserved to put forward, and I want to commend him for that—proposed a draconian solution. I was flabbergasted to see members of the right wing of the Conservative Party in this House voting for it. I noticed that there were only 20 of them but at least those 20 were in to vote for him.

1550

Now, the member for London West certainly stood up for individual rights and did not vote for that resolution, and I want to commend him on that. My friend from

London West as well, I want to note—and he will not criticize me for sharing this with you—sees the committee of which we are members—I happen to be lucky enough to be the Chair of the government agencies committee and the member for London West is a member of that. He noted to our committee, appropriately, that other committees—we thought we had this right—had a right to bring forward bills that must be debated in this Legislature, and lo and behold our committee doesn't have that right. He and I are going to team up on this issue. He and I and other members of the committee are going to team up to see that our committee has a chance to also put forward bills from its members, and I think that's as it should be.

By the way, I think that's a good change in the rules. I don't want to say everything the government has done is wrong; that's a good change in the rules. I'm a fair-minded person.

The member for Etobicoke North, who often interjects when I speak, will want me to read into the record what Dalton Camp had to say in the Hill Times of November 8. Let me share with you what he had to say because you will remember—of course, I look around and you won't remember, but Ernie Eves will remember or perhaps Norm Sterling will remember that the Dalton Camp commission, appointed by the Davis administration, made recommendations for this Legislature. Let me share with you what Dalton Camp has to observe about the present circumstances. I'm going to read verbatim, because I want to quote from an authority. Dalton Camp says the following:

"All in all, another day in the life of the Mike Harris Conservative-Reform-downtown business and handball club government of Ontario. A group of whiners held a media conference to register a complaint over a government cut of \$2.6 million from programs helping women escape their abusive spouses. The government, it should be known, needs the money for escalating speech-writing fees and more adhesive tape to close the mouth of its hapless environment minister, Tony Clement, heretofore known to the National Post as 'a statesman.'

"Clement captivated his cabinet colleagues by cracking wise about wife-beating from his seat at Queen's Park. He later withdrew the joke.

"Beneath all this Harris era levity there is the calculated effort to emasculate the opposition in the Legislature by changing the rules inside and painting the world with the green ink of political donations outside. The prize for this is a tighter grip on power and the ultimate triumph of personal ideology over public responsibility. This is easier done because of a supine, blandly indifferent public that continues, out of memory and word association, to see some resemblance between John Robarts and Bill Davis and Mike Harris.

"What has been learned of our legislative system, often described as parliamentary democracy, is, to paraphrase Churchill, that it is not the greatest system in the world but merely the best we know. What can be said for it is that it allows government to function, and that is

functions best when it enjoys a strong opposition whose powers are sufficient to test and probe government legislation, without providing the government from governing—something only made possible in the American system.

"It is wearying to document the proposed changes the Harrisites are going to make in Ontario's House rules. Among them"—and this is the predicted changes; of course, the opposition helped block these changes and bring the government to it's senses for once. "Among them, a reduced quorum from 20 to nine, which will encourage more absenteeism, more nights for play and less public interest in the proceedings. Then—and no surprise from a government prone to falling over its own tongue—a shorter question period. As well, changing the order of questions as set out in standing orders to a dependence upon the whim of the Speaker. And so on, and on.

"The government's justification for this is, of course, that muzzling the opposition makes for greater efficiency in the discharge of public business.

"The need for greater efficiency has been, as we know, the obiter dictum, or campaign slogan, of every pettifogging dictator since Ghengis Khan, a conviction that justifies the silencing of any and all opposition as an offence against public order and administration tidiness.

"Meanwhile, the Ontario government, hopelessly hooked on the morphine of money, is steadily undoing the work of the Ontario Election Finances Reform Act of 1975 and the Election Finances Act of 1986, both engaged in the effort to limit the influence of big spenders in party financing. The principal focus of the Harris government has been to make it easier for large contributors to donate more to the Harris party.

"In a report prepared this year by York University's Robert MacDermid for the Centre for Social Justice, the author defines the Harris effort: 'The changes significantly raised contribution limits, giving more influence to businesses that make up about 95% of those who gave the maximum contribution.'

"As an example, between 1995 and 1997, contributions from Canadian Highways International (\$387,531), Coretellucci-Montmarano (\$335,839), and Barrick-TrizecHahn-Munk (\$312,828) lead the pack of corporate donors to Harris Toryism. Others were not far behind.

"The Harris party has become far and away the richest provincial party in Canadian history. The irony, as MacDermid points out, is that the greatest donor of all has been the Ontario taxpayer: Tory donors got \$7 million in tax rebates for their contributions.

"Harris's corporate sponsors acknowledge the Premier's fierce concern for his party's financial well-being. One imagines him, after a busy round of cutting government expenditures—among this, \$2.6 million wrenched from the budget for battered women—then adjourning to the company of his party treasurer to count the party's money.

“This is Ontario?” he asks. I thought Dalton Camp had a very astute and perceptive observation of what is going on in the province of Ontario.

We’re not talking about a Liberal, we’re not talking about a New Democrat; we’re talking about a Conservative, but one unlike the Minister of the Environment, one who does not want to see the uniting—I shouldn’t say “the uniting;” my friends in the business community will help me with this—engineering the takeover, friendly or unfriendly, of the Conservative Party of Canada by the Reform Party of Canada. We’ve already seen that takeover take place provincially. The Minister of the Environment wants to see that happen on a federal basis.

So we can see from an independent, objective observer like Dalton Camp that this government is indeed engaged in the diminishing of the democracy of the province of Ontario.

The merits of this bill should be discussed in full and comprehensive and extensive debate. Instead of debating time allocation or motions which choke off debate in this Legislature, what we should be debating are the intricacies of the bill, the hostages that we see in the bill. From time to time, my colleagues will know, you will find somewhere in the bill a hostage, something nobody saw.

I looked in the red tape bill, for instance. You’d be interested to know, Mr Speaker, that they want to further diminish the role of the Niagara Escarpment Commission, which is there to protect escarpment lands, a beautiful territory that my friends Mr Tilson and Mr Sterling and I would like to save. I looked in the red tape bill and there they are again trying to diminish that, much to the applause, I’m sure, of my friend Bill Murdoch, the member for Grey county, who would like to see it abolished completely. It’s a death by a thousand cuts which is taking place, which is certainly of concern.

Time and again we see this government moving away from this Legislature and using its vast resources, both the taxpayers’ dollars and their own party funds, to set the debate in public. They did this before the last election. You will recall that the auditor was very critical of what they did in terms of advertising. But you see, the smart guys in the background, the ones who like to hang around the politicians—I see some of them in the government gallery from time to time; not now. They sit there with their smirks on their faces—not the person presently there—and say, “Ya know, we’ve got a lot of influence over this government.”

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They think it’s smart. They think when you take \$100 million of taxpayers’ money and use it for advertising which is clearly—even the auditor alluded to this—of questionable value but certainly bordering on—I would say not bordering on but most assuredly a waste of \$100 million by this government on self-serving government advertising. This from a party that already has money falling out of the treasury chest.

The biggest building boom in Ontario today is for bigger halls to hold the Tory fundraisers, to get all those developers and people who benefit directly from the

policies of this government which put the boots to the poor and helps the richest, the wealthiest and most powerful the most. Those halls are bulging with people who go to the fundraisers, paying big bucks. Mind you, they get a tax credit back, as all donations are eligible for tax credits. There they are, large as life.

My friend the environment minister is back. I made reference only through quoting Dalton Camp. I want to assure him I was not making any personal remarks about him; I was simply quoting an article from Dalton Camp where he mentioned the member, who is assiduously endeavouring to unite the Reform Party and the federal Progressive Conservative Party, much to the chagrin of that distinguished statesman Mr Joe Clark, who has been such a stalwart within the Conservative circles for so many years.

I look forward to something other than this kind of debate in the future. I hope you will abandon these constant debate-limiting motions in this House. I hope what you will do is bring the House back when you’re supposed to. Mike Harris, who always says, “Everybody else should work harder,” had this Legislature sit only seven days.

The member for Davenport will be shocked to know that, perhaps, but the House sat only seven days previous to coming back another month late in the fall session, in late October on a Thursday afternoon and then headed off home for the weekend—well, first of all, after the speech from the throne, headed to the Albany Club to celebrate, to tinkle the glasses together and to drink Scotch or whatever it is the rich people drink at the Albany Club, the friends of the Tories; Scotch and the most expensive of wines.

Anyway, I promised my colleague from Davenport that I would share some time with him this afternoon because he too is perturbed by the government’s action in limiting debate, in constantly eroding the democratic process and in making the fundraising and fund spending of this government, the huge amounts of money that this governing party, the Conservative Party, spends in Ontario to be a major factor. Whenever money dominates politics, you can be assured that corruption isn’t far behind and you can be assured that the system is diminished by it. Take a look at what happened south of the border in the United States. There is the lesson.

I hope members will look into their consciences and request that the Premier not invoke these kinds of resolutions again.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): We were speaking to this matter only a couple of days ago. This matter has only been on the floor of the chamber, in terms of debating, for the equivalent of two afternoons. I’ve got to remind myself that of course we’re not debating the bill today, are we? We’re debating the time allocation motion.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: People over there are somewhat cynical. I intend to abide by the rules. I intend to abide by the standing orders and to conduct myself in compliance

with those standing orders and the process that has to be followed. That means I've got to address my mind to the time allocation motion rather than the bill itself. I understand that.

Today is the last working day here in the Leg for the pages. I know the Speaker introduced them when they came here and then, early this afternoon, acknowledged their having served their term here, but I want to especially thank the young page from my riding, from Niagara Centre, Justin Tisi. As has been noted, and Jim Bradley a few moments ago made reference to the students who were here, there have been any number of pages who have been here and served this Legislature, and I tell you, all of them have been remarkable. But Justin Tisi I think goes home after tomorrow with some special sense of accomplishment. He's performed exceptionally well, and you will know that his mother, Vivian Tisi, has been here in the chamber on many occasions. His father, Ray Tisi, was here with a younger brother and sister, Stephanie and Daniel. It's a great family, and I want to thank Justin for serving us all so well.

Interjection: They've all done a great job.

Mr Kormos: I agree, they all have. Unfortunately, because I've got to stick to the time allocation motion, if I can only tout one, I'm going to tout the one from my riding, OK? I'm going to tout Justin Tisi and his family. Justin has done a super job and he should be very proud of himself. His family is proud of him, and when he returns to school, I'm sure he'll have many interesting things to tell his classmates.

Here we are, that's what made me sad, because Jim Bradley mentioned the Sir Winston Churchill Secondary School students who were here. There was a whole whack of them, several classes, grade 10s, 70 grade 10 students and 45 grade 10 French immersion students, so 115 young people here. They got taken on a tour of the assembly. They weren't able to be here for question period because of the busing arrangements they had made. Jim Bradley is right; he and I spoke to them because their families come from both the St Catharines riding and south St Catharines, Niagara Centre.

Both Mr Bradley and I were quite enthusiastic about these young people, these students, being at the seat of Ontario's democracy. We both—I know I always do and I suspect other people do as well—encouraged these young people to become as familiar with Queen's Park, the assembly, as they are with their local city hall or as they are with their local Bell telephone office. This is their Parliament. Even as youngsters, even as people unable to vote, I impressed upon them that they pay taxes too, and they do. Everybody pays taxes. Young people, every time they buy a CD or any other sort of commercial item, they're paying provincial sales tax and GST. We have an obligation of course to them, as we do to their parents, who pay not only PST and GST, but pay income taxes and gasoline taxes and so on.

I was very proud, as I am with any group that comes here, to talk to them about them being here where democracy is practised, then I realized what we were to be

debating this afternoon: another time allocation motion, another closure motion. This is the second one already. We've been sitting for three weeks, and already two time allocation motions.

I think back 11 or 12 years ago now, when I was first elected here, to opposition, and the Liberals of the day started to use time allocation motions. We thought this was just an incredibly brutal and bullying way of forcing legislation through. We were very angry about it and we did everything that the rules let us do to demonstrate that concern about time allocation.

But to be fair, time allocation, when it was imposed then, was imposed after there was lengthy, lengthy—more often than not extremely lengthy—periods of debate. Closure motions were invoked after there were clearly measures being taken by the opposition designed to slow down the progress of a bill, the bell-ringing, all the tactics that opposition had available to itself then. I say that to be fair, because, although we were very concerned about the time allocation or closure motions of the Liberals back in the second Peterson government, I appreciate that they were done by the government after it had been made clear to the government that the opposition were going to be firm in using every exercise, every effort to slow down the progress of a bill.

1610

Then came the NDP government and I saw yet even more usage of time allocation closure motions. I was as concerned about those, with the NDP government, as I was when I was sitting in opposition and it was a Liberal government, and I voted against those time allocations, those closure motions, as well.

We've seen an incredible acceleration in the utilization of closure motions over the last five years now, since 1995. The rules have been compressed to provide and permit fewer and fewer rights for the individual member and certainly fewer and fewer rights for the opposition. When rights are reduced for the individual member and/or the opposition, they're reduced for government backbenchers as well. I believe that.

Maybe my approach or attitude towards being in the government backbench was a little different from the people who are here, I don't know, but surely it's got to be frustrating, especially for some of the newly elected people here—and I give them credit—to have had every intention when they came here, just full of enthusiasm, full of passion for what should be an exciting new challenge in their professional lives and their careers, to have come here with perhaps some sort of fantasy, if you will, about how Parliament works, about the fact that there's going to be debate and exchange of ideas and that policies, once they are introduced, also have an opportunity to be moulded and to be worked by the members of the assembly. My suspicion is that what those people have discovered is that the Parliament is nothing like they anticipated it to be, the whole process, of course, of whipping votes—you are familiar with that, Speaker—in other words, to vote according to the directions of the whip or not vote according to the directions of the whip,

or be there or not be there according to the directions of the whip, or comment or not comment according to the directions of the whip. That's not a very progressive way to nurture a democratic body, a democratic institution.

I was talking to our member from Sault Ste Marie just a few minutes ago and he was telling me that he was driving his parents, I think to the airport, within the last couple of days. They reached down the south end of Bay Street, down near Front Street, and his folks of course are from Sault Ste Marie. The member from Sault Ste Marie told me he was driving his folks, elderly people, and they were of course approached by a squeegee kid, who politely, as he tells it to me, offered to clean the window and was as politely responded to with a decline by the member, at which point the squeegee kid, the squeegee person, said, "Thank you kindly, have a good day."

I've got to tell you, the reason I relate this—it's not directly from the member from Sault Ste Marie but I'm sure he entrusts me to relate that story to the people here—is that that contact with a squeegee person, with a squeegee kid, is more consistent with my experiences than it is with the sort of stuff that we read about from time to time or that we hear about, especially coming from government members when they try to justify Bill 8.

From day one with respect to this issue there has been an effort to link squeegeeing to crime. As well, the attack on squeegee kids is being presented as part of the broken windows theory. In other words, if you don't start apprehending the little things, if you don't start fixing the little panes that are broken, before you know it all the panes will be broken and the windows in the buildings adjacent to that window will be broken as well. I mentioned this the last time I spoke because I think it's a little distorted, the approach that if you don't deal with small crime, big crime then flourishes. That would be fine if there was any relationship between squeegee kids and crime and we haven't seen a single bit of data that would tell us that squeegee kids are inherently criminal or that the presence of squeegee kids leads to bigger and greater crimes. It's sort of like the Reefer Madness stuff out of the 1940s—right?—the Reefer Madness syndrome, which has been disproved over and over again.

All of our observations are that there is no relationship between squeegee kids and crime. There was an interesting comment made last night that I read in Hansard from one of the government backbenchers who indicated in his comments to the Legislature that we had to eradicate squeegee kids because they were bad for tourism—again I'm paraphrasing what he said—that they weren't an attractive sight. It was part of the cleaning up the streets to make them more accommodating to tourists. Again, I haven't seen a single bit of data that suggests to me that tourists are—what would you say?—overwhelmed, disgusted or inclined to leave Toronto by virtue of squeegee kids.

When I leave tonight to get back down to Welland down in Niagara, getting ready to enter the Gardiner, I'm hoping there's a squeegee kid there at the end of Univer-

sity Avenue, please, because before I hit the Gardiner and all the spray and the slush and the muck that's going to be thrown up on me in that two-hour drive back to Welland, I'd like to start with a clean windshield. I'll tell you right now, there's a toonie ready for the squeegee kid who'll do my windows on my little Chevy S-10 when I reach the Gardiner this evening.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): What kind of car is that?

Mr Kormos: It's a five-year-old Chevy S-10 with bumps, dings and scratches and a cracked windshield.

Hon Mr Stockwell: And Corvette wheels.

Mr Kormos: I wish. That's what happens to Corvettes when you don't continue to nurture them with the appropriate pavement; they turn into Chevy S-10s. So be careful. If you've got a Corvette, be careful, be gentle with it, be kind to it before it turns into an S-10.

The S-10 isn't a bad truck. It's got a 4.3-litre V-6 engine, which is much more powerful than the 2.8 in the last one I had, a 1984 Chevy S-10—good torque. I think it's 150 horsepower. It's also because my dealer takes exceptionally good care of me and my truck.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): Who's that?

Mr Kormos: David Chev-Olds on Niagara Street in Welland. It's a unionized shop, Canadian Auto Workers, so you never have to worry about the shop working on your car on a unit charge, where of course they've got to rush through as many vehicles as they can or as many jobs as they can in the day to make a decent buck. So David Chev-Olds on Niagara Street in Welland, a unionized shop, excellent service job—the phone number is 735-3690—start at 8 am, and if you're looking for a salesperson, Cathy Robertson can't be beat. Cathy Robertson has purchased every GM car that I've owned since I began driving, and I'm appreciative of it. I've owned some other trucks and a few other GM products from time to time, and once I owned a car made by trade-unionized German workers, but we won't talk about that. Mind you, it had a reasonably good resale value.

I'm looking for the squeegee kid to be there when I hit the Gardiner at 7 or 8 o'clock tonight, because I assume we're not sitting.

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): But he's not unionized.

Mr Kormos: He's an entrepreneur. Maybe that's the problem with these people. These people don't like entrepreneurship. They don't. This government thinks small business is some non-union shop with 300 workers earning \$6.85 an hour. That's this government's idea of what small business is. We've talked about this before. You don't understand small business. I grew up in small business. My parents were entrepreneurs. My parents ran a little store, and the kids worked in the store. That's how the family business supported the family. It wasn't a matter of having a payroll of 20 or 30 people. It wasn't even a matter of being incorporated. That's small business. My grandparents were small business people. They ran a little grocery store. Again, that's real small business. That's what's happening out there now.

1620

Do you want to know something? I've often thought about my grandfather with great respect in the context of the current illegal immigrants trying to come into this country, because I've seen where my parents and my grandparents came from—I've been back to that part of Europe; of course, I'm very fortunate and very blessed to have been born here—and I would like to think that my grandfather would have broken the law if he had had to, to bring his family to this country. I suspect that there are more than a few people in this chamber who don't have as strong Canadian roots as the neighbours do, who are inclined to agree with me. I suspect there are people whose ancestry is from any part of the world, whose parents or grandparents probably came here legally, but people who would wish that, had their parents or grandparents had to break the law, they would have. I suspect that's true of more than a few people.

I just put that in the context of the incredible and growing antipathy towards people who basically break the law to get into this country. Some of them, I'm sure, are criminals, but many of them, I'm sure, are just people who are trying to escape from very, beyond difficult economic circumstances in their homelands.

I know that the member from Sault Ste Marie the other day talked about Irish immigrants, and he spoke very much from the heart because his own ancestry is Irish. He betrays that from time to time in some of the phrasing that he uses, in some of the lilt to his speech.

Why aren't we focusing on real criminals? Why aren't we extending our resources to catch people who traffic drugs, to catch people who prey on children and on women? Why aren't we using our police resources to clamp down and get focused investigations on things like home invasions and what I assume—and I only assume this—are the gangs that sponsor them and perpetrate them?

Why is this government so focused on squeegee kids when admittedly there are scarce resources? I'm prepared to acknowledge that. We've got police forces understaffed across this province. People yesterday made reference to having met with their local lobbyist from their local police association. I, of course, met with those police officers who were here at Queen's Park too.

The message they give every single person they lobby is that they need help if they're going to do the job that we've called upon them to do. We can't send cops out there saying, "Go tackle crime," but then say, "No, you're not going to have the resources, you've not going to have the staffing and you're not going to have the weaponry." I'm not just talking about guns. I'm talking about the other tools you need, and in this day and age, probably some very sophisticated tools. It's not fair to the police officer and it's not fair to the communities which expect a modest level of security in their own communities.

Quite frankly, busting a squeegee kid isn't going to prevent a single break-and-enter in any other part of Toronto, isn't going to prevent a single bit of drug-

trafficking, isn't going to stop a single home invasion. Busting a squeegee kid isn't going to stop the telephone fraud and the other frauds that are perpetrated upon seniors on a daily basis. Really, isn't it all about priorities? This government is hell-bent on criminalizing behaviour which is merely annoying and not in itself criminal.

I agree with some of the comments. Some people find it distasteful for a squeegee kid to approach their driver's side window or their windshield to squeegee their car at a stoplight. But there are all sorts of things that happen on our roadways that are annoying. You know it; I know it. There are all sorts of things that are annoying, but we don't send the police out after them. We don't use our scarce policing resources and our criminal justice resources and our correctional resources simply to bust annoying people, throw them in jail and then keep them there for three, four, five or six months. That doesn't solve the problem.

My strong suspicion is that kids are out there squeegeeing as a result of, among other things, the incredibly high level of unemployment that still exists among young people—twice that of adults; twice that of their parents.

My other suspicion about squeegee kids is that they're targets, they're easily targeted. Their appearance tends to be somewhat contrary to what is the mainstream, if there is a mainstream, and I don't know what it is if there is a mainstream. You know what I'm talking about: the clothing style, the earrings, the coloured hair and the hair sticking up because it's got gel in it and stuff. Some people find that a little shocking. Heck, I remember the 1960s. I know I'm not supposed to remember the 1960s, but I remember the 1960s. There were a whole lot of people who were incredibly shocking. Some of them are sitting in this Legislature now.

Interjections.

Mr Kormos: But it's true. That's why it's particularly easy to target squeegee kids and to vilify them and to suggest that somehow, by their very nature, they're criminals because they don't live the way other young people live.

Quite frankly, I'm not happy about young people having to go out and do that sort of thing to hustle a few bucks. I'd be much more pleased were there the sorts of jobs that were available when I was their age, where young people could go out and work, notwithstanding for lower wages than full-time workers were making or for lower wages than what an adult worker might make. When I was a teenager, those jobs were available, and they were sufficiently available that if you didn't like your job you could quit it and go down the road and get another one. The fact is that isn't the reality of Ontario any more.

One of the problems young people have when they're out there looking for jobs is that the fast-food jobs, the retail sales jobs, those jobs that young people historically used to work at as students part time and on weekends and during the summer months, are now being worked at by their parents because their parents have lost their jobs in factories and as a result of corporate restructuring, like

the Bell telephone workers and like the UCAR workers in Welland and like auto workers, who have been in constant fluctuating cycles of booms and valleys.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: That's right. The jobs that young people historically used to work at are now being done by their parents, and they're being done two and three jobs at a time.

There's not a single indication by this government to justify their criminalization of mere squeegeeing; it has all been anecdotal. If a car has been scratched or a windshield wiper has been torn off, let the Criminal Code charges be laid. It's as simple as that. I can hear the argument already: "How would we catch them?" Precisely the point. Are you going to have cops doing squeegee undercover, videotapes and cameras and people wired for sound? I've seen those movies. It's absurd.

Are you going to have cops spend the whole day circling around the block hoping to get confronted by a squeegee kid? They may be squeegee kids, but they're not dummies. As soon as they see that 1998 Ford Victoria stripped down with no chrome and the solid black roof, they're going to have half of an idea that's a cop in there. They're going to be hard-pressed to go rushing up saying, "Please." It's more like they're going to say, "Constable, are you looking for directions?" I mean, come on. It's not going to end it. There will be some arrests, but then the games will start, because there are some good lawyers out there who have already indicated what so many of us feel in this Legislature: that the law in fact won't even survive constitutional tests.

I raised that the other time I spoke to this. I talked about the extortion sections of the Criminal Code of Canada. I talked about extortion and how the aggressive panhandling section, "aggressive manner" definition, interestingly seems to parallel the basic prerequisite for an extortion charge. Again, it's up to lawyers. I'm not suggesting that legislators should automatically use constitutionality as a reason for not passing a law, because that can be something of a cop-out. I felt this as a city councillor many years ago, as well. Legislators shouldn't blatantly breach the Constitution, but their job is to pass laws. It's the court's job to determine whether or not those laws are constitutionally valid. I accept that and I understand that and I live with that. But it is something to be called upon to pass a law for something which is merely annoying and not in itself criminal, to pass a law to say all of a sudden, "We don't want squeegee kids at our intersections."

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: He wants to say something. Go ahead.

Mr Mazzilli: Intimidate.

1630

Mr Kormos: OK, who are intimidated. A door-to-door salesperson is intimidating if you're not in the right frame of mind; a telephone solicitor. Talk about annoying, these clowns with the telephone soliciting companies use the computerized dialling and you get this electronic voice. You want to bust somebody? Go bust them,

because they intrude right into your own home, and they inevitably do it at suppertime. You get a phony canned electronic voice trying to peddle something to you, a set of free steak knives, my goodness. And they're persistent, because computers are insensitive to the most rude interjections. Computers don't respond to the most Anglo-Saxonish of responses.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Order.

Mr Kormos: What was I doing, Speaker? Can I go now? I don't know, something upset the Speaker.

The member for Sault Ste Marie is here now. You'll recall, Speaker, I was telling you what he had to say to me about his folks encountering squeegeers.

I don't want to see police resources out there to bust squeegee kids, and inevitably that's what they'll be doing. You talk about fines, and one of the government backbenchers last night said, "We're not going to jail them, because they have the choice to pay fines." They're not going to pay the fines. That's why they're out there squeegeeing. If they could afford the sort of fines you want to impose on them, they wouldn't be squeegeeing. So they're going to go to jail.

Interjection: Relax, Peter.

Mr Kormos: I wish I could relax about this, but I'm afraid this is just so repugnant a proposition. You're saying it's a big deal. It probably isn't a big deal, because it probably impacts on, at the end of the day, but a few hundred people. But it says something about our community and about our society. We want to criminalize people who are out there hustling to make a couple of bucks. That's the long and short of it. They're trying to make a couple of bucks. Are they aggressive sometimes? I'm talking about squeegees now. Of course they are. That's how you market services. That's how you get out there and persuade people to buy your product. Salespeople are pushy. That's how you sell.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): It's the sizzle on the steak.

Mr Kormos: It's the sizzle on the steak, it's the hustle.

These kids are being told, "Stop hustling." These kids are being told, "Go on the dole." These kids, with enough gumption and wherewithal, are being told: "Stop doing what you're doing. Go on the dole." These are kids who are trying to make the best out of what are probably some pretty miserable lives.

I had some fun the other night just reflecting how cops are going to go out. The other image that comes to mind is you have a cop and he's got a squeegee kid, he's got the gun on the squeegee kid, he says, "Drop your squeegee, kid, drop it now." The most absurd scenarios are going to result as a result of this legislation.

But I'll tell you, there are going to be some great court cases, there are going to be some incredible court cases. I'm looking forward to some of the litigation that flows from this legislation as creative lawyers launch defences for squeegee kids and attacks on this legislation. There are going to be some incredible cross-examinations of police officers and other crown witnesses. What are we

doing sending crown witnesses into court when they should be pursuing their daily jobs?

Secondly, the panhandling.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Secondly? You've been speaking for 40 minutes.

Mr Kormos: I understand. Speaker, the government backbenchers are putting me under pressure. I've only got 13 minutes left to say everything I wanted to say about this legislation, because this is it. Next time this bill is called there will be no more debate. All those members who haven't had an opportunity to put their views on the record are going to be denied that by virtue of this motion today.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): I'm sorry.

Mr Kormos: "Sorry," you say. Don't apologize to us; apologize to the people of Ontario for breaking down some very basic, fundamental bastions of democracy in this parliamentary system.

Mr Tilson: I am apologizing to you.

Mr Kormos: Apologize to the people, because this bill, after six o'clock this afternoon, will never, ever again be debated. It's going to go to committee, and the Chair of committee, with the domination of government members on that committee, will determine when and where and how committee meetings are held—nothing new. It's the same heavy-handed, bootstrap, brown-shirted, blackshirted, white-shirted style that has been used by this government from their first days here in 1995. That's what it is. It's a complete denial of the right to debate and the right to dissent and the right—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The Chair recognizes the member for Mississauga Centre.

Hon Mr Sampson: Thank you, Speaker. I was listening very attentively to Mr Kormos's speech and I believe he said things in the last few minutes that are unparliamentary and I'd ask him to withdraw.

The Deputy Speaker: I didn't catch the term, but if the member from Niagara Centre said something that is unparliamentary I'd ask him to withdraw.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Essentially what the point of order that the member from Mississauga was dwelling on is that the member for Niagara Centre pointed out that we're brownshirts—

The Deputy Speaker: No. I just wanted to clear up something with the member from Etobicoke North, if he would like to listen. Indeed, I'm going to do it whether he wants to listen or not. I don't allow debate on points of order so that is out of order.

The Chair recognizes the member for Niagara Centre.

Mr Kormos: You know what? The government backbenchers are probably right. I probably did say something unparliamentary. I suspect they're right. That's why I apologized and withdrew it, without hesitation, because I've been showing great restraint. If they think I said something unparliamentary about them, they ought to know what I've been thinking about them for the last five

and a half years. What I've said about you is nothing compared to what I think about you. My thoughts are extremely unparliamentary, but—

Remarks in German.

That is the truest maxim that could ever be said about humankind.

Even in the shadow of this government, where the poorest people are going to be busted and sent to jail, where panhandlers—as I told you the other day, I'm not as well travelled as some of you are, but the only places I've been to so far in my life where panhandlers are swept off the street and busted are totalitarian countries. I've been to some of those countries and so have you.

I've just got some messages here. This is something I can deal with later, because I've only got nine minutes left. Go ahead, Mr Marchese, help me with those if you can.

1640

I'll go on to the panhandling. Panhandling and begging is a manifestation of poverty. Get it? It's not a difficult one. It's a manifestation of poverty. Nobody goes out there, cup out or hand out, for what amounts to literal spare change unless they have to. As I said the other day, do I find panhandlers an inconvenience? Only to the extent where I haven't enough spare change. I would put to people like you—

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [Children]): Why do they come here from New York?

Mr Kormos: The nice thing about Americans is they can give US money, which is worth an extra 50% more than ours is. A buck from an American tourist is worth more than a toonie from you or me.

We have an increasing number of panhandlers on the streets of Toronto, and increasingly on the streets of other communities. Just as there's vilification of squeegee kids by virtue of the mythology of squeegeeing, I want to know who presented the facts that would give rise to concern in Toronto about panhandlers around queues waiting for a bus. As I told you the other night, if you're trying to protect people from unsafe environments, the safest place to be panhandled, if you're actually fearful of the panhandler, is when other people are around. At a bus queue would be the best place to permit panhandling. The safest place to be panhandled is in a lit area if, indeed, you're frightened about what the panhandler may do to you. The safest place to be panhandled is at a well-lit ATM area, where inevitably there are security cameras.

We spoke about panhandling while you're intoxicated by alcohol or drugs. Do you understand that for so many of those people they've got to be, before they can get out there and hit those streets? So many of those people were like so many of the people in here: they had families; they had mothers and fathers; they had daughters and sons; they had spouses, wives and husbands. Please don't for a minute think they're finding any great personal dignity in being out there holding out a cup or a cap or a hand. The myth of the panhandler who dies and leaves an

estate worth \$2 million—oh yeah, give me a break; I've heard that one too. That's all they are, is myths.

Last time I spoke I asked you to please, next time you're downtown, walking back to your apartment or to lunch or dinner, wherever it is, talk to some of those panhandlers. Rather than turning your eye to avoid eye contact, try making some eye contact. If you're so inclined, through whatever motive, to drop a loonie into their cup, why don't you look into their eyes while you do it and wish them well and make some human contact with a small but obviously a visible population of people, who are on the very, very margins of our society?

Other cultures have classes, stratification. In some cultures there are classes that are the untouchables. We would tend to condemn that sort of culture which would create a class of untouchables, yet we practise it ourselves. Instead of acknowledging and understanding that panhandlers are out there as an act of desperation, go to some of the crummy rooms that they have to rent and live in, that they rent by the day or by the week only as a result of what they can accumulate by way of spare change out there panhandling. Take a walk through some of the incredibly stinky, dirty, condemnable buildings that landlords are renting to these people and understand that their lives aren't particularly pleasant ones.

You're suggesting you're going to solve the problem by putting them in jail. Why don't you solve the problem by making sure that people in those positions have sufficient benefits and resources available to them so they can live in decent, clean housing? You talk to the people out there who are panhandling, who are capable and willing to work, who indicate to you very clearly that after one or two days out on the street it's not exactly a matter of sprucing up to go in for a job interview. You look bad; you smell bad; you haven't slept well; you haven't shaved; you haven't bathed. So the old "Go get a job" is pretty trite advice, because they're not likely to be able to just walk in, present their resumé and be considered along with the other job applicants.

These are people our health care system has failed and lost. These are people who have been sent out onto the streets because of declining health care dollars and because of a complete absence of any community-based health care system. These are people who die lonely, miserable, cruel, tortured deaths on top of subway grates during the coldest days of winter. These are people who—yeah, do they use the parks for some personal toilet facilities? I suspect they do, because when you don't have a home and when you're barred at the door to the restaurant when the owner, for whatever reason, says no, it's for customers only, you've got to use whatever facilities are available to you.

Just walk a mile in their shoes, if only in your mind, and understand why some of them might feel compelled out of desperation to do more than sit there passively with their hand out, why some of them might be inclined to ask more than once, why some of them might have sufficient left of their own personalities to feel offended when well-dressed middle-class passersby just walk by

without even making eye contact, without even saying "No, sir" or "No, ma'am" when they make a request. Think about the incredible attack on dignity that that is, and that is performed by people like you, people like us, on a daily basis, the big wide circle around the panhandler and the avoidance of eye contact, not even enough to acknowledge them as a human being. You'd be more inclined to say "Hi, pooch" to a dog that was on the street than you are to these people.

You treat these people as if they were somehow alien and foreign, but they're not. They have family histories; they have career histories. They've got stories that could be told about their lives too. At some point in their lives they probably had hope left, but at another point in their lives that hope was taken away from them, and they were never given a chance to reclaim any active role in our community either societally or economically.

You want to jail these people. The rationale was put forth by a government backbencher somewhat clearly last night when he said it was all about tourism and making our streets sort of more presentable. Is this part of the Olympics bid?

Some government that rather than addressing poverty and resolving it wants to stamp out, eradicate, the evidence of it. Sweep the streets clean. Send them somewhere else, New York City style, Mayor Giuliani. Use army barracks and just throw them in there as if they were in concentration camps.

I've been to those programs in New York City and I've seen what's done, and it's a complete denial of any personal dignity of the people who are subject to those programs or of any sense of their civil rights or civil liberties as citizens, as members of our community.

I think you get the message that I am not going to be supporting this closure motion. I think there's a heck of a lot more that should be said about this bill before it's rammed through this Legislature, and I think you can suspect that my colleagues and I will not be supporting this bill. I say to you: Such a modest piece of legislation, but shame on you for such a denial of human dignity to so many—

The Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired. Further debate?

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I again rise to speak to a motion to permit this Legislature to vote on a very important bill presented by the Attorney General, and that is an Act to promote safety in Ontario by prohibiting aggressive solicitation, solicitation of persons in certain places and disposal of dangerous things in certain places, and to amend the Highway Traffic Act to regulate certain activities on roadways.

1650

It's unfortunate that we, the government, have to take this step in order to have this bill democratically voted on in this House, but the opposition do not wish it to come to a vote. I can understand the third party. The third party has consistently denied any rights for victims or any bills or laws that might assist the innocent victims in our society. I am more surprised, however, with the Liberals,

the opposition, because at times they've indicated that they also had some concern with the victims of our society.

But as a crime commission, I remember we did a letter not just to our caucus but of course to all members of this House inviting them to invite us into their ridings so we could hear the concerns of their constituents. I must say we received absolutely no invitations except from the member from Davenport, who forms part of the official opposition. He was the only member of the opposition who invited us into his riding, and at that time we heard the concerns and the fears of his constituents regarding crime and disorder on their streets, including squeegee people.

This bill, when and if passed, I believe will permit us to take back our streets from the disorder that is presently going on. I'd like to take this opportunity, as I've already spoken to Bill 8, to discuss certain sections and parts of the bill about which there have been questions raised.

For instance, Bill 8 is aimed at aggressive solicitation and solicitation in various captive audience situations. The legislation of course is aimed at ensuring the safe and secure use of the sidewalks, streets and other public places by us and our families. Solicitation, however, that is courteous and does not occur in captive audience situations, including the roadway, is not—and I repeat not—targeted by this legislation.

Most charitable activities are likely to fit this description. The Safe Streets Act uses the Highway Traffic Act definition of "roadway," which refers to the part of the street or highway used for vehicular traffic but not the shoulder or the sidewalk. Charitable activity that does not occur on the roadway, the paved portion, would not be affected by the legislation so long as it is not aggressive and does not fall within the other captive audience situations.

It is expected that many charities would be operating in compliance with the law; for instance, charitable car washes which conduct their activities from the side of the road and divert cars that wish to participate off the roadway. Charities often work with the police and local authorities to carry out their efforts in public places safely and in accordance with the law. Charities and their volunteers should be encouraged to continue their good work.

The government appreciates the valuable work conducted by charities, and I certainly in the riding of Cambridge appreciate the many volunteers who work so hard in regard to charitable aspects in our riding.

The police would have a range of options. In addition to the power to arrest, they could, when they encounter someone engaging in an offence under the proposed Safe Streets Act, choose the appropriate tool in the circumstances. They could, for instance, give a warning, advise that the conduct may be an offence and that future infractions could result in a charge. They could just ticket the offender. They could summons the offender to attend at court. They could also, as an alternative, contact fam-

ily and children's services if the person is under 16 years of age.

They could, of course, contact the social service or psychiatric treatment agencies to deal with the issue if the person is an emotionally disturbed person. If the person is mentally ill, they could, as with any existing provincial offences, provide alternative dispositions. These would include police options to provide linkages with the mental health system, intervention programs and courts aimed at ensuring the mentally ill are treated fairly and receive the services they need.

For example, in the city of Toronto the government has initiated a special mental health court, 102 court, which combines mental health workers, psychiatrists, judges, duty counsel and crown attorneys who work together to find the best result for any particular citizen. This model has proven most effective in the year that it has been operating.

In addition to the safe streets provisions for fines for first offences and imprisonment for repeat offences, sentences can include probationary orders for the first or subsequent offences. Probation orders can include a number of conditions, not repeating the offence being one, or could provide for community service or restitution or participation in municipal training programs. Where the offender is willing, probation can also include terms requiring the offender to undergo certain treatments, such as alcohol or drug counselling. There are many ways to help the needy in our society.

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is reviewing the mental health legislation with a view to removing barriers that stand in the way of families, police and social workers to ensure people posing a danger to themselves or others get the care they need. This is consistent with our government's Blueprint. The Ministry of Health Care has also established 24 assertive community treatment teams to provide services for people who are severely mentally ill and are living independently in the community.

The government has also allocated \$45 million over three years for housing supports and spaces for people with mental illness and special needs. The Minister of Health announced the first phase on October 7, in which \$24 million will immediately be provided for capital and ongoing operating grants to agencies to develop supportive housing for people with serious mental illnesses: 800 housing units in Toronto, 100 in Ottawa and 100 in Hamilton.

As with any provincial offence, police and the courts would have a number of options when dealing with offences under the Safe Streets Act. These would include probation orders to help address the underlying causes. Specific legislative provisions under the Safe Streets Act are not necessary to permit for probation, as probation is permitted by the Provincial Offences Act. Justices and prosecutors are well aware of the availability of probation orders to address appropriate situations of need by provincial offenders.

I am pleased that we are proceeding as quickly as possible to pass this very important bill. This is a bill that has been requested by the chief of police of the city of Toronto, by the mayor of the city of Toronto and by many other municipal officials and citizens right across this province who want to take our streets back for the general public so that we and our families can walk and drive in safety and without apprehension.

1700

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I'd like the people of Ontario to note that this is a closure motion, which means that we've only have two hours and a few minutes to debate this item. Any time that there is closure imposed, it takes away from a principle of democracy. We know that this government in the last four years has used more closure motions than any government in the last 127 years. We're debating this bill and we're objecting to this closure motion.

The bill, of course, speaks to the squeegee issue. What we object to here is the priority of the Tory government. They're focusing on squeegees over stretchers and schools. Really it's an attempt to distract Ontarians from the real issues.

I was really surprised when the Attorney General stood up today, when he made the introduction. He said, "We have some other programs in place that squeegee kids could enter in order to get out of their lives of squeegeeing." He'd indicated that there was enough housing available for them if they wanted to get out of the parks. At least that's what I took from his introduction of this bill. I was somewhat confused about his statement.

As I remember, any night in Toronto in the winter-time, there are over 8,000 hostel spaces, which is not sufficient for people who are on the streets—8,000 and more. At any time, if a squeegee person wants to get into this housing, he has to line up and find a space. On many a night, the spaces are all full—not a few of them, all of them.

You will remember last year when a person who was sleeping right in front of my window at this Legislature died on a heating grid. My office was on the first floor. The Premier's office was on the fourth floor. It was easy to see. Anybody walking by could see there were always two people sleeping on the grate, and on that very day when that person died—and of course after that happened you had a big kerfuffle and people were showing their concern. Everyone showed up, including the Premier himself. I can remember that I'd made some phone calls that very day. I wanted to find out if there was indeed a space available that night for that person sleeping on that heating grate. Was there space available in the hostel system? Could he have gone that night and slept there? What I found out was that the system was full. The hostels were all full. He couldn't have gone there to sleep even if he wanted to.

Why am I bringing up this example? I'm bringing it up because I want to speak to the real issues of this province. One of them is housing, but let's slip the real prob-

lems and issues of this province under the carpet and let's talk about squeegeeing, because that is what's called a hot button. It's been identified as a hot button by the whiz kids in the Premier's office. Just push that hot button and you get some responses out there, find out what the people really think. In the meantime, we have people who don't have housing. We have people literally dying who can't get into the hostel system. That's a disgrace for the city of Toronto.

What about the issue of health care? Is that also important? I can remember in 1999, when all of the emergency wards in the west end of Toronto—all of them, all nine hospitals—were closed. If you had a heart attack, you called 911, you got into an emergency vehicle and you had to wait, literally, to get into the hospital. You couldn't get in there. They had to maintain a life support system outside in the van. You couldn't get in there because it was closed. Unacceptable. Totally unacceptable.

Has the system improved? Has it really improved? Sure, we're spending the money at it, but I know for sure that in 1999 all of the hospitals in Toronto were closed; you couldn't get in. That's where we have to spend our money.

Isn't that more important, to use the resources of the province, than going after squeegee kids? Sure, it's an issue, but it shouldn't be a political football, and that's what this has become, a political football, easy to kick around and seemingly easy to solve—I say "seemingly" with a caution—because it sounds good if we do something about it. Let's pass a bill, right here, Bill 8. Let's pass it. Give the cops the power and the problem is over. No. There are internal problems with this bill, as previous speakers have indicated, which will not make it fly.

I want to first of all point out, before I get into the details of it, what some of the real issues are that this government should be addressing. Has there been a decision made by this government, has there been a promise made by this government to ensure that all the emergency wards are going to be open? I would hope so. I put my finger up. I want to find out if the promise has been made and if the promise is going to be broken. You make many promises, and you are proud of saying, "Yes, a promise made and a promise kept." On this side of the House we can tell you, a promise made and a promise not kept. The reason I say this is because, check the emergency wards and check our health care system.

School closures: You should be ashamed to create a funding formula that makes people get on the street with their children to demonstrate against it because they can't get your ear. Your ears were closed. "I hear nothing, I see nothing and I speak nothing," until there was such a firestorm out there of kids and parents in our schools that they marched in the streets, marched in front of the Premier's office, marched in front of the Legislature, marched in front of the schools.

That problem isn't solved yet today, because the city of Toronto school board made a decision not too long ago to close 10 schools. Why is that? They were forced

into it by you. They were forced into it by the Conservative government. Why? Because you made a decision to introduce a funding formula which had nothing to do with programming and real education. Let me repeat: That funding formula had nothing to do with education or with programming. It had to do with buildings and square footage. It had to do with thickness of walls and spaces.

The schools, as you know, are the heart of the community. They are the hearts of your communities as well, and these hearts were ripped out, 10 of them in the city of Toronto; 10 hearts ripped out from the community. These schools are more than centres of education. These schools are daycare centres. These schools have programs for parks and recreation. These schools are music institutions. These schools belong to communities. These schools are part and parcel of what we say is our right to a quality of life as Canadians, and they ripped out 10 of them in the city of Toronto and many more in Ontario.

Not only that, this very month the city of Toronto school board is going to make another announcement. Do you know what? They are being forced by you to take 10 more hearts and cut them out, so that we'll have 20 of them being cut out in the city of Toronto, 20 schools being closed.

Interjection.

Mr Ruprecht: Oh yes, of course, they don't want to hear about that. They don't want to have that accusatory finger placed on their chests because they are really legitimately responsible for this abomination against the education system. Those are some of the real issues that we should be addressing in this Legislature. Have we done that? I don't think so.

1710

What about the environment? Even the very ministry is being decimated as I speak, reduced by millions of dollars. We know the figures. In the city of Toronto alone, 800 people are going to die this year because of air pollution. Did you know that? We had 800 die last year. Has the air quality improved in the city of Toronto? No. Has the Minister of the Environment done anything about this? No. We still have coal-burning plants, the worst we can do.

Can we then say to the United States: "Listen, you're doing something wrong. Don't send us your smog from Pennsylvania. Don't send us your smog from your coal-burning plants because you are really decimating Toronto, you are really pushing your air into the city of Toronto. Don't do that; please, don't. Don't have coal-burning plants."

How can we possibly say that? How can the kettle call the pot black? We're doing it ourselves. Those are the real issues of Torontonians that we speak of right here. Those are issues you should be addressing. Stop this terrible bad air, because it's literally killing our residents. That's the environment, and there are many more issues in the environment we should be addressing right now, except we won't have time.

What about this issue of taxes? We should be talking about taxes too. That's another issue.

What about the very speech that was made a few minutes ago here? It was: "We've done something about mental care institutions. We've spent some money so that squeegee kids, some of them who are emotionally unbalanced, can access some of these institutions."

I don't think so. I represent the area of Parkdale and I know what has become of it. I know that the recidivism rate was over 70% and that was the revolving door. What did we do with mentally ill people going into the system? There wasn't a bed available for them, because there was no money. You cut that out. They entered the institution, they were literally kicked out within a day or two, given some pills and told: "Please go. I don't think we have homes for you, but just go out. You have to look after yourself." That's what we're talking about when we say "revolving door policy." That's what we're talking about when we say "recidivism rate," meaning people are coming back. They're not being treated. You've taken them in as mentally ill persons, you're treating them for a day or less or not at all and you're pushing them out as soon as you possibly can. They're out on the street, they're going to the hospital without walls—our communities. They're going there and finding no accommodation. And you're saying that's not the issue? That's an issue.

If we want to talk about the crime of squeegee kids, let's talk about the crime in our communities. Why can't we get the hookers and the pimps and the drug dealers off the streets? Have we not given enough information and resources to our police department to do that? Are we not in a position to get rid of the prostitutes on our street corners? We can't do that. And we are concerned with squeegee kids? Is it not even more important not to have your children go by the hookers and their pimps and their drug dealers on a daily basis and no resources? Ha, ha.

I remember what happened in our own area not too long ago. We couldn't handle them; it's was as simple as that. The police said: "You know what, Mr Ruprecht? We can't handle it because we've got no resources. We have no money. Give us the money and give us the resources and we might just do something about it."

You are saying, "We'll give you some money but the money is to be used for something else." Give our police the resources, we'll do something about it, and not this particular legislation.

Finally, Mr Speaker, I want to thank you for letting me carry on for a while.

I just want to say that you have your priorities in the wrong spot. I hope that you will reconsider.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): On this time allocation motion on Bill 8, it is certainly my pleasure to follow the parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General, Mr Martiniuk. He comes with some experience and some credibility, so I think it is a privilege to follow him. He's also the parliamentary assistant to native affairs. He has covered most of the pertinent issues with respect to this bill.

We've had many hours of debate in this House on the issue, and from my listening to it neither the Liberal Party nor the NDP have a position on community safety.

Why would I say that in the context of this motion? Recently, each of the members here went through an election, and I'm looking at the position of the NDP. Their position paper says, "Who is clearly on the side of Ontario's working families and unions?"—oh, pardon me; it's just "working families."

There wasn't mention in here, and that's disappointing to see, because during the most recent election—and I should out of respect, if I may, take a moment, with your indulgence, to mention that during the election in June 1999 there were five candidates, including myself. Just for the record I would like to read it out. This isn't in any way arrogant, but it's to show respect, that there's a process here: Jacinthe Millaire, from the Natural Law Party, got 0.5% of the vote, 242 votes; Gail Thompson, from the Green Party—actually quite an interesting candidate—got 1% of the vote, at 467; Jim Morrison, from the NDP, certainly had a message—he was clearly on the side of trying to get elected, that's for sure—and he had 4,235 votes, at 9.2% of the vote; and Garry Minnie, a very nice gentleman about my age—I didn't say younger or older; very much my vintage—a former teacher and a very nice fellow, received 32% of the vote. It's the first time ever in the new riding of Durham that the Liberal Party came second, so clearly, you might say the target of strategic voting worked there. He got just over 14,000 votes. Respectfully, we worked hard and had a great team of people—I want to thank those people—and we got about 58%, with 26,000. It was encouraging.

What I heard during the election was the issues. Of course, health care was important, education, and we've committed 20% more funding. I also heard about the importance of safety in our communities, and you would know that in my riding of Durham—the fastest-growing area in all of Canada, it has been brought to my attention most recently—new suburban neighbourhoods and new families want to feel secure in the parks and neighbourhood areas, in arenas and at schools.

What we're seeing on television and in the media is quite the opposite. For the opposition and third party to ignore the reality, that it's the thin edge of the wedge—where do you start addressing aggressive panhandling or aggressive street activity, swarming and those kinds of things? You've got to start with the law. You can't just ignore—members from the other side, certainly the Liberals, right now are trumpeting their position, which is no position on crime.

The Young Offenders Act is clearly their statement about where they're soft on crime. It disappoints me, and I know it disappoints the people in my riding. I spent some time during the election in Blackstock, in Bond Head, of course in Bowmanville—I reside just outside Bowmanville, a wonderful rapidly growing town with all the urban pressures—and in Columbus and Enniskillen, to name but five. I think Sean Conway uses that line, and I'm trying to learn as I go here. I'm just using that out of respect for Sean Conway, "to name but five." But there's Maple Grove, Mitchell Corners, Mount Carmel, Newton-

ville and Newcastle, to name but five more. They all supported that we need safe communities.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): What about Newtonville?

Mr O'Toole: Newtonville, of course, and Welcome, which is in Mr Galt's riding. It's called Welcome, but it really means "Welcome to Durham," which is my riding. I think that's what the sign on the 401 is implying. The member from Northumberland, don't take exception to that, because I know you represent those constituents very well. Every day I turn on the television, you're speaking.

1720

What other kinds of indications of support for this legislation am I aware of? Dave Leonhardt from the Canadian Automobile Association—four million members in Canada—has come out with a press release dated November 15, saying, "Safe streets, not squeegee kids." They support this legislation.

I look further. I look beyond just Toronto, the Toronto-centred thinking, and I've got to start with Mayor Lastman, who clearly approached our Premier, who's in the House tonight. He's the only leader in the House tonight. You're not supposed to point that out, but a few brownie points here and there for me don't hurt. But he is here, and he's always here, always on the job. Mayor Lastman must have spoken to our Premier—

Interjection: And he's up to the job.

Mr O'Toole: He's up to the job, because we do what we promise, and clearly safe communities—but Police Chief David Boothby clearly—

Mr Agostino: On a point of order—

Interjections.

Mr Agostino: —suck up to the Premier. That's an embarrassing opportunity—

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order. The Chair recognizes the member for Durham.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you, Dominic. It really didn't cross my mind, but now that you mention it. I know it has crossed your mind. Actually, you have such weak leadership that I think there are several people looking for it.

Interjections.

Mr O'Toole: Seven people looking for it. We won't go through that.

But what does Dalton McGuinty actually think of this issue? In the National Post on February 9—I think this must have been written for him, because he usually doesn't have a position. Their position is: You stick your finger up in the wind and whichever way the wind's blowing. "Poverty breeds despair, despair breeds crime." This is the fundamental theme in Bill 8, which Minister Flaherty introduced on November 2, to first of all set the stage that crime and safety are absolutely critical. We've got to have safe communities. That's central to our policy.

Also, this week we had the Ontario police association, and I want to thank them for their delegations. They actually brought to our attention that this bill was being

supported by Police Chief David Boothby. I can't speak for our police chief, Kevin McAlpine, but I'm confident that he supports safe communities, and Bill 8 is in that direction. I can also tell members that I met with the Ontario police association president, Terry Ryan. He's very supportive of the actions of this government. Clearly, we're on the side of the victim and we're actually tough on crime. There's no question about it. It doesn't pay to be in crime in Ontario with Premier Mike Harris at the helm—who's, by the way, still here.

There are other people—Tom Bell, also a member of the police association, and Mark McConkey. I can tell you that Mark McConkey is a person who knows firsthand the price of violence in our streets. He sustained an injury while on duty not too many years ago. In this context, bringing back respect and dignity in our communities, in our schools, in our streets is exactly something the people of Ontario want. They demand it. It's the courage of strong leadership, able to make those tough decisions; that explains why we're in government and why the opposition are languishing in the outbacks of popular support.

I can only say that I'm so proud to speak, as I said earlier, following the parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General, Mr Martiniuk. The Attorney General's remarks today were absolutely—I support, almost to the word, almost to the syllable, everything he said. In fact, I may repeat much of what he said. But the Safe Streets Act that was introduced November 2 has had wide discussion.

As I said earlier, I've heard that the opposition and third party don't support it. I take that as they don't support, in a general sense, any movement by this government to address the issues of safety in our communities.

Representing the people from Hampton, Kendal, Leskard and Manchester, to name but four, I would say with confidence that I'll be supporting this bill. It's my privilege to wrap up by saying, in conclusion, I've been forced to share my time with the member from Northumberland.

Mr Agostino: I'm not vying to get into cabinet or to cross the floor, so I probably won't be as kind to the Premier as my colleague across the floor.

This is an interesting debate. It's unfortunate the government has chosen to cut short this debate, because philosophically it really goes to the heart of how one political party or government of the day chooses to handle what is really a social problem and tries to criminalize poverty, tries to criminalize homelessness in this province, tries to criminalize the fact that people are marginalized.

They really talk tough on squeegee kids. There's a real myth here. The member across the floor went on and on about how they're concerned about safe streets and how tough they are on criminals because they're beating up on these squeegee kids, the big, tough squeegee kids they're going to come down on. What he failed to tell you—and I'm sure he would have told you if he had more time—is that there are fewer police officers on the streets today in

this province than there were when this government took office. I'm sure my colleague forgot to tell you that.

He forgot to tell you that his government opposes gun control and the gun registry. They're spending millions of dollars of taxpayers' money to go to court and challenge the federal government's gun control law. These are the tough, law-and-order guys. These are the guys who believe that they own, have a monopoly on law and order. This is the same party that believes it's acceptable for guns to be in the hands of people across this province. They want to turn this province into another Florida, where literally every citizen can carry a gun. That is the reality. This government opposes gun control and gun registry and is spending taxpayers' dollars to go to court to challenge this. We know what guns can do. We know the correlation between ownership of guns and murder and violence in American cities. But they don't seem to understand it.

This is the government that talks about safety and kids but last year passed legislation that allows 11-year-old children to carry guns and go hunting. This is the government that put handguns in the hands of 11-year-olds and thought that was acceptable.

This is the government which on Monday, in front of a gallery full of police officers, announced with great fanfare that they were going to bring something in, and rightly so—and we agree with that legislation, except we haven't seen it—to go after individuals who cause police chases and speed away from police. We said to you on Monday, "We're going to support that." It's the right thing to do. But we're sitting here and there's no legislation, of course.

Talk about mixed up priorities. Here we have a government that, first of all, has fewer cops on the streets, opposes gun control, allows 11-year-old kids to go hunting and believes that this legislation is more important than legislation that would put away for life people who cause police chases and who risk the lives of police officers and innocent citizens. They think this is more important. Why don't you ask most Ontarians if they believe that dealing with 200 or 300 squeegee kids in downtown Toronto is a bigger issue than dealing with these criminals who cause police chases, cause speeding and end up killing police officers and citizens who are innocent? Do you not think that's a priority?

Why isn't that bill here? Why is this bill here before that one? Talk about mixed up, screwed up priorities on the part of this government, and you talk the talk on law and order. This is nothing more than a political hot button. This is nothing more than what your pollsters are telling you to do. You talk about putting your finger in the wind. The reality is, every single bill, every single piece of legislation you bring in is brought in after your pollsters tell you what to do. This is a government by polling, a government of hot buttons.

I say to the Premier, who is here today, if you're serious about crime, if you're serious about safer streets, add more cops to our streets, drop the opposition to gun control across this province, revoke the legislation that

allows 11-year-old kids to carry guns and bring in immediately the legislation that would punish people who cause police chases. Those are the things you can do.

1730

Squeegee kids are a problem; they're not a menace. They're simply a symptom of bigger problems that we have in society in dealing with people who are poor, are marginalized and need our help. Those people need help; they don't need to be handcuffed and put into jail. They need government programs, government assistance, a hand up, not a kick in the head. What this is going to do is simply put a cute little cosmetic Band-Aid on a much bigger problem.

I say to this government, get your priorities in order. If you're serious about—

The Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr Galt: It's certainly a pleasure to be able to respond. It's interesting to note the excellent presentations we've already heard from the parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General, but particularly from the member for Durham—very entertaining. Mr Speaker, you can rest assured that he has unanimous support from all of the party leaders present in the House this afternoon.

As we look at this time allocation motion for Bill 8, I listened very attentively to the member for St Catharines earlier this afternoon. The member for St Catharines was expressing great concern for some of the backbenchers and great concern for some of the ministers in this House. I'd like to respond to that because I understand a person by the name of Don Guy seems to be running the Liberal Party. I have no idea who this Guy is, but I understand he has something to do with Pollara, a vice-president or something. I understand he was the provincial campaign manager for the provincial Liberals, but now I understand he's really the boss of the Liberal Party. Dalton is sort of the front person who's out there, just the front person, and really if you're not on Don Guy's list or not a loyalist to Don Guy, you don't rate.

I'm concerned for the member for St Catharines, that if he isn't a loyalist to Don Guy—and I hear a rumour that he isn't—he may end up not being in the front row. I enjoy his smiling face and his presentation, but if he ends up in the back row because he isn't a loyalist, that's most unfortunate.

Dalton should be very concerned about the upcoming leadership—

Mr Agostino: Mr Speaker, on a point of order: The member has continued to speak about an individual who is not in this House, who is not able to stand in this House and defend himself. I think it is inappropriate, I think it is wrong, and I do not think he should be attacking the integrity of individuals who cannot be here to defend themselves. By talking about Mr Guy, I really believe he has stepped over the line. I would ask you to rule him out of order and to—

The Deputy Speaker: It would seem to me that if we could only talk about people who are in this House, we would have very little topic matter.

The Chair recognizes the member for Northumberland.

Mr Galt: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for that brilliant ruling. It's interesting as we talk about this particular individual, the boss of the Liberal Party. I understand there's an upcoming leadership campaign and there's a Sandra Pupatello plan, better known as the "dump Dalton" plan. There's a lot of knives out behind this poor leader. Not only are the knives behind him, but I understand there's a knife out beside him. I think he's the best ally we have, and I just hope, for Dalton's sake, that he can survive.

We need Dalton here in the House as Leader of the Opposition. But I understand he's sort of messing up. He's not supporting one of his own backbenchers for president of the party; rather, he's supporting another individual by the name of Greg Sorbara. I think that's rather unfortunate. But I understand Chrétien is bringing out all the federal Liberals from the province of Ontario to try and prop up Dalton. That's great for us, because if we can keep Dalton there for another four years—unfortunately, that means Chrétien will be there for another four years. Dalton's helpful to us; Chrétien certainly isn't. That's rather unfortunate.

A wise man once said that of all the tasks of government, the most basic is to protect the citizens against violence. Violence can take many forms. In this day and age, things like AIDS and hepatitis B and getting that from hypodermic syringes is not the kind of thing that should happen. With the Safe Streets Act there's a lot of concern that we're going to try and get some of these syringes, needles, off the street—broken glass, used condoms, that kind of thing.

Maybe I could just relate a small story to you, Mr Speaker. One of my staff members who used to live here in Toronto—as a matter of fact in the Scarborough Bluffs area—back in 1993 went one day to pick up his three-year-old daughter at daycare. This daycare was on the corner lot of Warden just south of Kingston Road. As a matter of fact, it was right in Dan Newman's riding. He's a great member in this House who looks after his constituents extremely well. Right at the foot of Warden Street is a nude beach area. Anyway, when he went to pick up his three-year-old, the owner of the daycare mentioned that they'd found three hypodermic syringes lying in the bushes in the front yard. Now, they could have just as easily been in the backyard where the kids might have picked them up and ended up getting AIDS or something like that from them. This is a form of violence in a quiet sort of way. It's unfortunate that people would be so inconsiderate as to risk young children. Really, that ended up as the catalyst of why this individual moved out of Toronto to Northumberland. I can understand why he would have moved to Northumberland anyway. With the beautiful rolling hills, it has to be one of the most beautiful counties in the province of Ontario. But that's beside the point and a whole other story.

The provisions of the Safe Streets Act would make it an offence to dispose of any dangerous materials like a hypodermic needle or condom or broken glass. It would make it an offence for people that are threatening and being solicited for handouts. It would make it an offence to solicit other persons while they're intoxicated—that makes an awful lot of sense—and certainly with a captive audience. It's unfair when people are at an automatic teller machine to have somebody come up trying to solicit from you, extremely uncomfortable, even though some of these members in opposition say, "That's just a great place to be, with bright lights along with the video camera." I really have to disagree.

Also, finally, it would be an offence to disrupt traffic. We have enough trouble getting the traffic moving right now, because with this government we've created 610,000 net new jobs. Those people are all driving to and from work, they're producing goods that are being transported on the roads, we are ending up with a lot more vehicles on the road and we don't need to have them being held up. It's a nuisance to law-abiding citizens when squeegee kids and other aggressive panhandlers are out there.

As a matter of fact, it really creates a lot of road rage and there's a lot of concern right now about the amount of road rage it's created. Road rage can easily evolve from this kind of thing. As a matter of fact, just a quote from the CAA, a very reputable organization; this comes from David Leonhardt. "Increased congestion in Ontario's large cities has made drivers more impatient and road conditions more dangerous, Leonhardt says. 'The middle of a public roadway is no place to be conducting business of any kind. Pedestrians should stay safely on the sidewalks, except to cross the street.'"

I'm genuinely concerned for the squeegee kids and others who would be out on the road panhandling; it's really a very dangerous situation for them. I've heard of them rolling under transports to get away. They're facing, at minimum, two-tonne cars and half-ton trucks coming at them, not to mention the large transports. So I think it's very important just to get them off the street for their own safety.

When this issue came up I was quite concerned for volunteer fire departments, for some of the service clubs and whether they would still have the right to operate some of the voluntary toll roads. In discussions with the Attorney General and reading the bill, there's no question in my mind that they'll still have this opportunity. As a matter of fact, going up to where my cottage is, I often go through Northbrook. There is a Lions Club there, a great Lions Club, and they often have a toll road set up. It's voluntary. They don't stop the traffic. They have a nice sign. As you come into Northbrook it says: "Voluntary toll road ahead. Pull to the right." They do not interfere with the traffic. This is going to be very acceptable because it's non aggressive and it is not a captive audience. Service clubs do not have any real concern about this unless they're going to impede traffic, and we don't want service clubs doing that. I don't think service clubs want

to impede traffic anyway. Most of them are very very respectable people and I don't think you're going to find them all that aggressive.

It's time that we took the handcuffs off our police and gave them an opportunity to do something when they see these kinds of offences occurring. They would have the opportunity to arrest an offender (1) if he or she believes that an offence has been committed, (2) to establish the identity of the person, (3) to prevent continuation of that activity, and (4) when the offender ignores a warning not to repeat the offence.

1740

Tuesday of this week, many of us had members of the police force from our local community come and visit us here at Queen's Park. They also had a reception Tuesday evening down in the dining room. I heard repetitively from the police that they feel rather ineffective with some of the laws and that some of these laws should be changed, such as this one and others that have been discussed here this evening. That's what we're doing with this legislation.

This will also give the police some flexibility, and I feel that's quite important. The police would have options to deal with the problem by, first, essentially issuing a warning; secondly, they could issue a ticket; third, they could issue a summons; and fourth, they could contact the appropriate social service or psychiatric treatment agency.

If we are to tolerate this kind of behaviour, I'm afraid it's going to go down a very slippery slope indeed. By passing this bill, it's a preventative step from sliding down that slippery slope. I lived for a year on the island of Java in Indonesia, I've travelled in Bangladesh and in Thailand, and I can tell you that the kind of panhandling that goes on in the streets in those countries is not acceptable by anybody's measures or means. It's extremely aggressive as you pull up to a stoplight, and we just don't want that kind of thing here. It drives tourists away, it drives people out of our communities, and that's not what we want for any of our large cities, especially Toronto and Ottawa, where the squeegeeing already really is established. I think in countries like the Philippines—a country I haven't toured in, but I understand this from some of our Philippine immigrants—they refuse to go back to their homeland because of the aggressive panhandling that goes on at airports and on the roads in the Philippines. It would be most unfortunate if Canadians felt they didn't want to come back to Canada because of aggressive panhandling, but that's the situation that can evolve if you tolerate it.

In conclusion, in windup so that some other members of our party have a few minutes to make a few comments, the opposition may think this is not all that important a concern, but to some people who are out on the streets with their cars, there's no question that it is a significant concern to them. It's really at the very root of citizens having the right to go about their business undisturbed.

For this reason, I certainly can support the time allocation motion as well as being able to support Bill 8 very enthusiastically.

Mr Carl DeFaria (Mississauga East): I'm pleased to rise tonight to speak on this bill. Community safety is a very important issue with us, and I'm disappointed again that we are bringing measures to protect Ontarians, and the Liberal opposition and the other opposition are voting against it without taking into account that these measures are important to Ontarians. Each time we have brought measures to protect Ontarians, the opposition has voted against it. Each time we have brought measures to cut taxes for Ontarians, the opposition has voted against it. Each time we have brought measures to cut fraud in Ontario, the opposition has voted against it.

I was just yesterday in my riding of Mississauga East opening a community police station. Some 20 years ago as a lawyer training at Parkdale Community Legal Services, we were talking about community police offices and people thought it was an idea that would not be acceptable in Ontario because there was no need for it. Well, I would like to inform you that today it's very needed in Ontario. We all know of the recent shocking events of violation of law, of people who have been beaten and people who have been killed right here in the Toronto region, in Mississauga and in other regions of Ontario. It's high time for us to bring measures to curtail crime.

I can understand if the opposition has some suggestions, but they talk about squeegee kids. The first time I recall hearing about squeegee kids, it was raised by a member of the Liberal Party who had his windshield wiper broken by a squeegee kid. Last Tuesday evening, we had a member from the Liberal Party speaking on this bill, indicating that he often felt afraid in his car when he was approached by a squeegee kid, but he felt there was no need to bring in a law.

Interjection.

Mr DeFaria: It was a member of the Liberal Party who indicated that when he was approached by a squeegee kid, he felt afraid in his car, but all he did was lock the door and raise the window of his vehicle and he felt that that was enough, that Ontarians could do that and not have a law there to protect them.

We feel differently. We feel that there is a need to protect Ontarians so people in this city, people in this province, can feel that they can drive around the streets of big cities without fearing for their lives, that they can go out in the streets without being approached and threatened by people. This policy is well known. It is the broken-window approach to law that you have to curtail crime, even if it's crime that is considered minor, because if you don't curtail it at the beginning, it may escalate.

I know the problem that Ontarians have. I drive through Toronto, I walk in downtown streets, I take the TTC in Toronto, and I can tell you, I don't like people approaching me in a violent manner or in an aggressive manner when I am using my rights as a citizen to walk in

the streets of this province, and I think Ontarians feel the same way.

When I look at the bill, I don't see what the opposition Liberals and the NDP disagree with. I am sure they don't think that people should be solicited in a threatening manner. I'm sure they don't feel that Ontarians should endure abusive language when they are approached by someone in the streets. I'm sure they agree that no one should be allowed to dispose of hypodermic needles or syringes in the grass or in the parks. I know a member indicated that there was nothing wrong with it. What's wrong with throwing a syringe in the park? Something is wrong with it, because a child may pick up that syringe and may be contaminated with a disease. I hope the members will consider this bill and support it.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Sterling has moved government motion number 8. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1749 to 1759.

The Deputy Speaker: I just wanted to give my personal regards to the member for Ottawa West-Nepean. Glad to see your health allows you to be here.

Mr Hudak has moved government notice of motion number 8. All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Baird, John R.	Gill, Raminder	Newman, Dan
Barrett, Toby	Guzzo, Garry J.	Sampson, Rob
Beaubien, Marcel	Hardeman, Ernie	Skarica, Toni
Chudleigh, Ted	Harris, Michael D.	Snobelen, John
Clark, Brad	Hastings, John	Sterling, Norman W.
Clement, Tony	Hodgson, Chris	Stewart, R. Gary
Coburn, Brian	Jackson, Cameron	Stockwell, Chris
DeFaria, Carl	Johns, Helen	Tascona, Joseph N.
Dunlop, Garfield	Klees, Frank	Tilson, David
Ecker, Janet	Marland, Margaret	Tsubouchi, David H.
Elliott, Brenda	Martiniuk, Gerry	Turnbull, David
Eves, Ernie L.	Mazzilli, Frank	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Flaherty, Jim	Molinari, Tina R.	Wood, Bob
Galt, Doug	Munro, Julia	Young, David
Gilchrist, Steve	Mushinski, Marilyn	

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

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Curling, Alvin	Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Boyer, Claudette	Duncan, Dwight	Marchese, Rosario
Bradley, James J.	Kennedy, Gerard	Phillips, Gerry
Christopherson, David	Kormos, Peter	Ruprecht, Tony
Churley, Marilyn	Kwinter, Monte	Smitherman, George
Colle, Mike		

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 44; the nays are 16.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1 o'clock, Monday, November 22.

The House adjourned at 1802.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneure: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Huron-Bruce	Johns, Hon / L'hon Helen (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women / ministre des Affaires civiles, de la Culture et des Loisirs, ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées et à la Condition féminine
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Bruce-Grey	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Burlington	Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC) Minister of Tourism / ministre du Tourisme	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Carleton-Gloucester	Coburn, Brian (PC)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Lanark-Carleton	Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, government House leader / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Com- mercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
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Don Valley West / -Ouest	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	London West / -Ouest	Wood, Bob (PC)
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Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L)		
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Etobicoke North / -Nord	Hastings, John (PC)		
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)		
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)		
Guelph-Wellington	Elliott, Brenda (PC)		
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
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Mississauga West / -Ouest	Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)
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Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)	Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Alvin (L)
Nipissing	Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif	Simcoe North / -Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)
Northumberland	Galt, Doug (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Oak Ridges	Klees, Hon / L'hon Frank (PC) Minister without Portfolio / ministre sans portefeuille	St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)
Oakville	Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary (PC) Speaker / Président	St Paul's	Bryant, Michael (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Stoney Creek	Clark, Brad (PC)
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Stormont-Dundas- Charlottenburgh	Cleary, John C. (L)
Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Thornhill	Molinari, Tina R. (PC)
Ottawa-Vanier	Boyer, Claudette (L)	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	McLeod, Lyn (L)
Oxford	Hardeman, Hon / L'hon Ernie (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales	Thunder Bay- Superior North / -Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Gerard (L)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Ramsay, David (L)
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Perth-Middlesex	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Smitherman, George (L)
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Trinity-Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Waterloo-Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC)
Renfrew-Nipissing- Pembroke	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Wentworth-Burlington	Skarica, Toni (PC)
		Whitby-Ajax	Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
		Willowdale	Young, David (PC)
		Windsor West / -Ouest	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
		Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Dwight (L)
		York Centre / -Centre	Kwinter, Monte (L)
		York North / -Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)

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

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

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Justice and Social Policy/ Justice et affaires sociales

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Carl DeFaria
Marcel Beaubien, Michael Bryant, Carl DeFaria,
Brenda Elliott, Garry J. Guzzo, Peter Kormos,
Lyn McLeod, Joseph N. Tascona
Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Estimates / Budgets des dépenses

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Alvin Curling
Gilles Bisson, Sean G. Conway, Alvin Curling,
Gerard Kennedy, Frank Mazzilli, John R. O'Toole,
R. Gary Stewart, Wayne Wettlaufer
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

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

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Doug Galt
Ted Arnott, Marcel Beaubien, David Christopherson,
Doug Galt, Monte Kwinter, Tina R. Molinari,
Gerry Phillips, Toni Skarica
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Chair / Présidente: Marilyn Mushinski
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Toby Barrett, Marie Bountrogianni, Ted Chudleigh,
Garfield Dunlop, Dave Levac, Rosario Marchese,
Julia Munro, Marilyn Mushinski
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James J. Bradley, Bruce Crozier, Leona Dombrowsky,
Bert Johnson, Morley Kells, Tony Martin,
Joseph Spina, Bob Wood
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Marilyn Churley, Brad Clark, Caroline Di Cocco,
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Marilyn Mushinski, Richard Patten
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**Regulations and private bills /
Règlements et projets de loi privés**

Chair / Présidente: Frances Lankin
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Claudette Boyer, Brian Coburn,
Garfield Dunlop, Raminder Gill, Pat Hoy,
Frances Lankin, David Young
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

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