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of Ontario**

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de l'Ontario**

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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 15 December 1999

Mercredi 15 décembre 1999

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 15 December 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 15 décembre 1999

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HÔPITAL MONTFORT
MONTFORT HOSPITAL

M^{me} Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier): Lundi, le gouvernement a annoncé qu'il ira en appel de la décision de la Cour divisionnaire de l'Ontario concernant l'hôpital Montfort.

Let me remind the Premier that the Montfort Hospital exhausted every available recourse before seeking remedy before the courts. Montfort appealed to the Health Services Restructuring Commission and to the government. In fact, Montfort gave the government every opportunity over a period of three years to intervene and to reverse the decision of the commission.

Montfort n'avait pas de choix. L'hôpital s'est vu forcer de demander l'intervention des tribunaux afin d'assurer le respect et la protection des droits des Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes.

Comment le premier ministre peut-il questionner le bien-fondé d'une décision de la Cour divisionnaire reconnaissant les droits fondamentaux des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes et en même temps affirmer qu'il respecte les droits des francophones de notre province? Quelle contradiction.

Moreover, the Health Services Restructuring Commission no longer has the powers granted by this government. Donc, c'est le gouvernement qui depuis le début détient le pouvoir décisionnel dans ce dossier.

How can the Premier justify using taxpayers' money to appeal a court decision for the wrong reasons, adding to tensions between communities and turning his back on nation-building? Where is the moral backbone of this government?

Le gouvernement a le devoir et l'obligation—

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

SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): Today I want to take this opportunity to speak about the importance of Christopher's Law, Ontario's proposed sex

offender registry, to my constituents in Scarborough Centre.

In recent years, Scarborough has had the misfortune of being the location for several high-profile sexual assaults. Just last week three women were sexually assaulted on the same night. This past summer, the bedroom rapist terrorized north Scarborough. And in our most infamous case, the Scarborough rapist, Paul Bernardo, was responsible for a series of vicious sexual assaults.

These terrible crimes are the reason my constituents strongly support the creation of a sex offender registry. Sex offenders are the most despicable criminals in our society. The people of Scarborough deserve every possible protection from these criminals. The people of Scarborough deserve a government that gives police the tools they need to investigate sex offences.

I'm proud to be able to tell my constituents that in creating the sex offender registry, the Mike Harris government has fulfilled one of the recommendations made in the petition to keep Karla Homolka in prison. Over 4,000 Scarborough and area residents signed that petition. I am also very proud to be part of a government that recognizes that we must put the rights of victims ahead of the interests of the criminal rights lobby.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): Today I want to talk about priorities. I want to tell you the priorities that parents and students in the communities in my riding tell me they have for education, and how they see the misplaced priorities of this government.

I have received many calls and letters from parents in my riding who are concerned about this government's cuts to classroom education, cuts that have resulted in the elimination of programs for junior kindergarten, adult education and special education.

I spent a whole year working with local parents to save a school that was the very heart and soul of a small rural community called Romney. It was the only school closed by a funding formula that even Mike Harris had to acknowledge was flawed. Under enormous public pressure from parents in every part of Ontario, Mike Harris had to acknowledge his mistake, and before he called the election he changed the formula. But it was too late for Romney. By then, it was closed. The school board acknowledged the unfairness of the Romney decision but they had no money to change it.

Now these parents point out that the government has spent \$2.5 million for frivolous and unnecessary propaganda. That money could have been used to save Romney Central. It could have preserved special education and adult education programs.

Local students have helped to organize the return of over 1,000 millennium books. Totally and completely unsolicited, they returned them to my office and asked that they be returned to sender, with a request to the Harris government to spend tax dollars more wisely.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I am pleased to say that in the eastern part of my riding, the reconstruction of the Trenton Memorial Hospital is nearing completion. Come April or May, I expect patient services will be transferred from the old hospital to the new.

This new hospital was promised by the Liberal government and again was promised by the NDP government, but as usual, none of them came through. Thanks to the efforts of our restructuring commission, it is now being built and will be opened in the year 2000.

This redevelopment project will allow Quinte West to accommodate current demand and future population growth. It will be among the most modern, efficient and up-to-date facilities in the province.

The restructuring taking place in Quinte West, as well as in other parts of my riding, will also provide new services and will help to attract and retain new doctors and medical specialists in these underserved areas.

As well, residents of Northumberland and Quinte West will have access to the latest technology and telemedicine, where local doctors can consult with specialists in larger centres. These innovations and technologies are a result of the unprecedented reinvestment made possible by the hospital restructuring commission.

I'm very proud to be a part of a government that has finally delivered on what the former two governments promised, and promised for so long, but failed to come through. I'm proud of our government.

1340

POVERTY

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): As this Legislature closes and we ready ourselves for the holiday season, the needs of the poor and the most vulnerable become more acute. Yet we have a Premier who recently said "hogwash" when confronted with the fact that poverty is increasing in Ontario, Canada's richest province.

I want to remind the Premier that he touted another line when he was in opposition in 1992. This is what he said: "Let me hope we can do better for the hungry and for the homeless, for the single mothers, for those who did not get an increase in welfare payments." That is what this Premier said in 1992, that statement from a man who is proud that he has slashed social assistance by 20%. His cuts have swelled the ranks of our most

vulnerable. This is the man who says one thing and does another. Mike Harris said in 1992, "I suggest to the members of the government, when they go home over the Christmas holidays, that they reflect on the most vulnerable in our society and the back of the hand they have received from this government in 1992."

This is the ghost of your Christmas past. I will say, Premier and members of the government, reflect on your own words.

MILLENNIUM MEMENTO

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): I rise today to add my voice to the province-wide protests over this so-called Millennium Memento. I add my voice to the outrage felt by parents, teachers and, most important, the students of this province.

Across Ontario, students have been mobilizing. They are taking action by returning tens of thousands of these books to their local member's office and even to the Legislature. Later today, students from Ottawa will arrive in front of this House with a busload of these books. On Friday, students from Riverdale Collegiate Institute will be delivering over 1,000 copies to my constituency office. I didn't call them. They called me.

What's happening in this province is, the tensions and frustrations created by the government's thoughtless and heartless cuts are starting to boil over. As often happens, the youth of a society are the first to recognize the need for change. That is what is happening right now. By "change" I don't just mean an end to these books, but rather an end to the destruction of our education system. The protests surrounding these books are a symbol of the desperate state of our education system. Students are using old and out-of-date textbooks.

The extracurricular activities that are so important to developing children into creative and motivated adults are being cut, while teachers are being treated as the enemy. Then the government wastes \$2.25 million on these books.

Students have had enough. They want funding restored to their education system. By returning these books and raising these issues, they are making their voices heard. I support them and congratulate them.

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): I rise in the House today to congratulate four students from my riding who were chosen from over 100,000 submissions to have their artistic visions included in the My Ontario memento journal.

This keepsake responds to what students and parents have said they wanted as a souvenir of the millennium, a book that records the thoughts and experiences of elementary and secondary students throughout Ontario. These leaders of tomorrow explain in their own words what their contribution to Ontario will be in the future. I am most impressed with the thought and creativity that they have put into their work.

I am pleased that these students from my riding, Karolyn McIlmoyle, Alyssa Young, Emily Klotz and

Alison Petts, continue to see Ontario as a great place to live. Among other predictions, they see Ontario in the year 2020 as a clean and healthy place to live and they see a national hockey league for women.

Through our investments, we are providing Ontario students with a lasting legacy of their participation in commemorating the millennium, a once-in-a-lifetime event. I commend every student who participated in My Ontario and also the teachers and school board officials who helped to make our Ontario a success.

PREMIER

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I see by the Premier's schedule today that he'll be doing a couple of events this afternoon in the legislative precinct, one of which doesn't include attending question period and answering questions from either of the opposition parties. It's unbelievable, his lack of attendance in this House and the arrogance about not coming here, not being here to answer the questions not so much of the opposition, but questions the people of Ontario have to ask and want to put.

Let me just say this, Mr Speaker: I understand the Premier. He runs away from the media, he runs away from the Legislature, and I understand why he's running away now. I understand why the Premier runs away to the Macdonald Block. I understand him running away from all the problems because he doesn't know what to do and he doesn't want to face Dalton McGuinty in this House. That's why he's running away.

"I was taught by my mother and my father and by the values I learned as I grew up that you don't run away from problems. You don't run away from them. You meet them head on. You deal with them. You seek and search and consult wide and far to find solutions."

Interjections: Who said that?

Mr Duncan: Who said that? Who said it? It was Mike Harris in 1992. Look at this. Look what he did to poor Bob Rae when he refused to come to the House: quote after quote after quote. Shame on the arrogance over there.

DRESS FOR SUCCESS PROGRAM

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I rise today to recognize the innovation and bright ideas coming from the students at St Peter's Secondary School in my riding of Peterborough.

Dress for Success is a volunteer-run organization whose goal is to help women get a start in the work world by providing them with clothes and accessories needed for a job interview. I think this is a great initiative to break the vicious cycle of not having a job because you don't have the clothes because you don't have the money, again because you don't have the job.

If a person who uses this service is successful at her first interview, then she can come back for two more

outfits. This will give those looking for employment that little extra boost of confidence they need.

Having the necessary confidence at a job interview is difficult enough, but it is even more so if you don't have an effective resumé. The volunteers at Dress for Success also help with resumé-writing, as they have a computer and a printer on-site.

I'd like to congratulate the many volunteers who make this program a community success in Peterborough. The dry cleaning is provided by Windsor's Dry Cleaning Centre, the clothing and racks are donated by Just Like New, and Brock Mission donated the space in Cameron House on Chemong Road.

I'd also like to extend a special thanks to the students and staff at St Peter's Secondary School. You're doing a great job, and this government thanks you for your efforts to keep Ontario working.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on estimates.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): Mr Wettlaufer from the standing committee on estimates presents the committee's report as follows:

Pursuant to standing order 60(a), the following estimates, 1999-2000—

Interjection: Dispense.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): No.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I heard a no.

Clerk at the Table: —are reported back to the House as they were not previously selected by the committee for consideration and are deemed to be received and concurred in:

Office of the Assembly:

201 Office of the Assembly, \$94,608,700;

202 Commissioners, \$9,011,600.

Office of the Chief Election Officer:

501 Office of the Chief Election Officer, \$1,812,700.

Ombudsman Ontario:

2301 Ombudsman Ontario, \$7,782,800.

Office of the Provincial Auditor:

2501 Office of the Provincial Auditor, \$7,733,100.

Pursuant to standing order 61(c), the supplementary estimates, 1999-2000, of the following ministries and offices not selected for consideration are deemed passed by the committee and reported to the House in accordance with the terms of the standing order and deemed to be received and concurred in:

Ministry of Finance:

1203 Economic, fiscal—

Mr Duncan: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Dispense? Agreed.

Pursuant to standing orders 60(b) and 61(c), the report of the committee is deemed to be received and the estimates and supplementary estimates of the ministries and offices named therein as not being selected for consideration by the committee are deemed to be concurred in.

Standing order 62(a) provides that “the standing committee on estimates shall present one report with respect to all of the estimates and supplementary estimates considered pursuant to standing orders 59 and 61 no later than the third Thursday in November of each calendar year.”

The House not having received a report from the standing committee on estimates on Thursday, November 18, 1999, as required by the standing orders of this House, pursuant to standing order 62(b) the supplementary estimates before the committee of the Ministry of Community and Social Services, Ministry of Education and Training and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, are deemed to be passed by the committee and are deemed to be reported to and received by the House.

1350

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FRANCHISES ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR LES FRANCHISES

Mr Martin moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 35, An Act to regulate Franchise Agreements /
Projet de loi 35, Loi visant à régler les contrats de
franchisage.

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

The member for a short explanation.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): This bill is complementary to the bill introduced yesterday by the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, Mr Runciman. I am happy to report to the House that I had a meeting with Mr Runciman last evening and it seems there is agreement that there is more that needs to be done here and that we're going to work together to make sure this bill works its way through the process that's available to us here, that we will have substantial and full hearings on it, and that at the end of the day we will all be happy with what it is we have approved in the interest of fairness in franchising in the province of Ontario.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MEMBERS' PENSIONS

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Finance. Minister, with reference to Bill 27, we have discovered deep down

inside a delightful Christmas gift that you intend to give to a select group of MPPs in this Legislature. I want to make it perfectly clear in this House today that I and my party will have none of it. Your special provision says that MPPs are going to have special access to their pension funds. You're going to give a right to MPPs that none of the other 11 million Ontarians are going to be able to enjoy. Your new bill will allow some of our MPPs to have instant access to their pension plan at the age of 55 when you're going to give no other Ontarian that same said right. Minister, how can you possibly justify this double standard?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): First of all, people are not going to have access to money at age 55; they have to be retired first to access money which will be treated as a registered retirement savings plan. That was always behind the thinking of scrapping the former gold-plated MPPs' pension plan. That was always the thinking. And by the way, that's exactly what your party agreed to when it was discussed at the time.

Mr McGuinty: So that Ontarians, who are paying very close attention to these proceedings here today, understand what we're talking about, everybody outside of this Legislature who's not part of the special group about to be the recipient of a special gift from this government has to be able to plead financial hardship. They've got to be before the superintendent of financial services and they've got to get down on bended knee and plead for immediate access to their locked-in pension fund. There is no such requirement to be placed on MPPs. What you are doing here is giving yourself a right, a benefit, a privilege which is not to be enjoyed by any other Ontarian.

Again, Minister, I ask you, how can you possibly justify this double standard? Why is it that MPPs, from your perspective, are entitled to a very special right and a special privilege that nobody else is entitled to enjoy?

Hon Mr Eves: First of all, it is not a pension fund; it is not a pension plan. The pension plan was scrapped. We tried to put former MPPs—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Would the minister take his seat. We can't continue if I can't hear the minister because of the yelling and screaming.

Hon Mr Eves: We are trying to put former MPPs in the same position they would have been in had they a registered retirement savings plan. You're right, those 61 members and former members are being treated differently than any member of the public. They're the only 61 people in the entire history of the province of Ontario to unilaterally have their pension plans scrapped by the Ontario Legislative Assembly. So they are being treated differently. Every member who was entitled to that plan that previously existed, who had their rights vested, is probably giving up about two thirds of the value of that plan by accepting about one third, roughly, of what he or she would have been entitled to, to be treated as a registered retirement savings plan.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Absolute nonsense.

Hon Mr Eves: That is not nonsense, I say to the honourable member.

The Speaker: Order. The minister's time is up. Minister of Finance, I would appreciate it when I stand if you would—when his time is up, we go to one minute.

Mr McGuinty: I must say that my heart bleeds for this Minister of Finance who, when this pension was changed, was left with the paltry payout of close to \$1 million at the expense of Ontario taxpayers. That's what we're talking about here today. That's what this is all about.

Let's add all these things up together. This is a government where the Premier doubled the size of his staff. He then gave his staff 30% pay hikes.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Members of the official opposition, I can't even hear the leader asking the question when the members are shouting. I would appreciate it if you would allow some quiet so we can hear. I say to the Minister of Education, would she please come to order as well.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, your arrogance is showing. First your Premier doubles the size of his staff, then he awards them a 30% pay hike, then he works a three-, maybe sometimes a four-day workweek, and now we have a piece of legislation being rammed through this Legislature—there will be no public hearings—and it's going to give a select group of MPPs, yourself included, Minister, and also your Premier, a special entitlement to immediate access to a locked-in retirement account at the age of 55, a right to be enjoyed by no other Ontarian. I ask you again, Minister, how can you justify this double standard?

Hon Mr Eves: There are members and former members on both sides representing all three political parties in this Legislature who are getting exactly the same treatment. I might point out that all three parties agreed to this back in 1996.

Interjections: No.

Hon Mr Eves: Yes, they did. I was present at the meeting.

Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: That is factually incorrect. No one on this side of the House has that recollection.

The Speaker: That is not a point of order. The member knows that.

Was the Minister of Finance finished?

New question.

1400

APPOINTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSIONER

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question, in the absence of the Premier, is for the Minister of the Environment.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. We've said this before: We cannot refer to people being here or not being here. I've said it before.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order—

The Speaker: Just a moment while I speak. Member take his seat.

We've done this before. There are occasions when that will happen, as I explained to all the members, is that some afternoons when some of the opposition are not here, we're going to go back and forth. It is in the standing orders, and we can't do it. I would thank the member to not refer to anybody being here or not being here.

Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It has become almost impossible to have the Premier of Ontario come to this House to answer questions. He's in the legislative precinct—

The Speaker: That's not a point of order. Member take his seat. It's not a point of order.

Question, the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr McGuinty: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. You know that our province is in desperate need of a strong and tenacious, highly intelligent new Environmental Commissioner. I want to describe for you the impeccable credentials of the person you have chosen to be our new Environmental Commissioner here in Ontario.

This person was a provincial Tory candidate in Cochrane South in 1995. This person was a federal Tory candidate in Nipissing in 1997. This person acted as the president of the Tory riding association, in the riding of Nipissing as well, in the past.

Instead of looking after the environment, Minister, it is perfectly obvious that you are looking after the Premier's pals. How can you justify the appointment of Gordon Miller, a man with impeccable Tory credentials, as our province's new environmental watchdog?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Since I don't know what the honourable member is talking about, I'll refer the question to the person who does: the House leader.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): There is a process that a committee of this Legislature has gone through and that process is not at an end. I don't believe there has been any conclusion to that process at this moment in time. Perhaps it's a little bit premature on the part of the Leader of the Opposition to attack a man who has not even agreed to take the position. Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition opposes the process which his House leader recommended to the House leaders to undertake.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like you to rule whether or not this question is in fact in order to be asked of a member of the government.

The Speaker: Yes, I believe it is in order. Supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: The question is for the Minister of the Environment and I'll go back to the Minister of the Environment. Your job is to ensure that when it comes to the appointment of the new environmental watchdog, we are appointing a pit bull, not a chihuahua. We want a watchdog, not a lapdog. You're putting somebody in place whose credentials are absolutely impeccable in terms of their blue-blooded Tory lineage, but they have nothing of substance to offer when it comes to protecting our environment in the province of Ontario.

I'm asking you again, Minister: How can you justify the appointment of this man to a job which is demanding, and, given your government's track record, given your failure to protect the natural environment of Ontario, how could you possibly put forward the name of somebody who has nothing to do with the environment and everything to do with your party?

Hon Mr Sterling: It is not the duty of any minister of the crown to appoint the Environmental Commissioner. It is the job of this Legislative Assembly to appoint the Environmental Commissioner. That is what the Environmental—

Interjections.

The Speaker: The House leader take his seat. Order. Government House leader.

Hon Mr Sterling: It is clear in the Environmental Bill of Rights that the Environmental Commissioner is appointed by this Legislative Assembly, on address to this Legislative Assembly. When the committee of the Legislature which has been asked to look into this question has a recommendation, there will be a motion in front of this Legislature in order to carry that wish out, and at that time members of the Legislature can express their opinions with regard to this matter.

Mr McGuinty: Listen, the fix was in when it came to this matter and the fix was in from the outset. Don't give us any of this claptrap about it somehow being the responsibility of the collectivity inside this Legislature. It has everything to do with this government. It has everything to do with Mike Harris. It has everything to do with his personal, handpicked choice to be the new Environmental Commissioner, somebody who's on the side of Mike Harris as opposed to being on side of the people of Ontario. That's what this is all about.

We've heard much that these were the people who were going to come and fix government. Now we discover that they themselves are doing everything they can to ensure they remain at the trough. At the same time they're leading their friends to the public trough. These aren't the people who came to fix government. These aren't the people who are here to help Ontario. These are the Mike Harris people who are here to help themselves. I have no more questions for this government.

Hon Mr Sterling: Apart from the total disrespect for this House—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister, take your seat. Order. The members will come to order so he can answer the question, please.

Hon Mr Sterling:—and disrespect for the committee that heard this particular matter, I'm informed, for instance, by a member of the committee who just wrote to me that this particular candidate, Mr Miller, was the number one choice of the people who were working for the Legislative Assembly and were rating the candidates for their skill in taking this job.

The Leader of the Opposition not only shows a total lack of understanding for the process, but also goes about slandering people who are putting their name forward for public appointment by this Legislative Assembly. I respect this Legislature. I respect this institution. Mr McGuinty certainly doesn't.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Health and it concerns the very critical problems that we're having in emergency rooms now across the province. Minister, it was your health care restructuring commission that came forward and made recommendations that you followed when you went out there and started cutting emergency care.

According to the Specialists Coalition of Ontario, that commission used wrong information to convince the public that there was a surplus in hospital beds. You seized on that misinformation and you cut 5,500 beds province-wide. Now we see that record numbers of emergency patients are being turned away from hospitals, record numbers, unprecedented numbers, that the coalition of specialists refer to. They say that the worst is yet to come, that the problem is not getting better and that it's not going to get better; it's going to get worse.

You, Minister, chose to cut hospital beds, to gut emergency rooms to finance an income tax cut. This is the result. Tell us what you are going to do to fix a problem that you and your government created?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): You are fearmongering. There have been no cuts to emergency rooms. There have been no cuts to health care funding. In fact, the cuts to beds in the province of Ontario occurred on your watch. There were 10,000 beds cut before our government came to office and it is our government that is expanding the capacity of 56 emergency rooms in Ontario. It is our government that has made available more than \$300 million to address the issue of emergency room pressures and we will continue to take the needed steps to make sure that people in Ontario have access to the system.

1410

Mr Hampton: In 1995 when you became the government, here in Toronto, if you added up the total hours, hospitals were only on critical care bypass for three days in the month of October, for three days. You've been the government now for almost five years and it's now 41 days they were on critical care bypass during the month of October. That's what you've done, Minister. No one else did that. No one else gave the orders to cut more beds. No one else gave the orders to turn nursing into a

part-time, casual occupation rather than a full-time one. No one else has presided over the nursing crisis. You have, and no one else.

The question is, now that the crisis is getting worse, now that the Ontario Medical Association and the Ontario Nurses Association, the Specialists Coalition of Ontario, the paramedics of Ontario, and the Kyle Martyn coroner's inquest have all blown the whistle on you, what are you going to do to fix the problem that you and your government alone have created?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I'd just like to remind you what you did. The NDP and Liberal governments closed 10,000 beds. The NDP government reduced entrance to medical schools by 10%. The NDP social contract cut funding for hospitals, doctors and home care by—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Minister, take your seat. Order. We're not going to continue while the members are shouting across from each other. Both sides were doing it. We'll just wait.

Minister of Health?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Let me continue. The NDP cut \$60 million out of psychiatric hospitals. The NDP delisted 486 drugs. The NDP and Liberal governments did not open one new long-term-care bed in the 10 years prior to our getting here.

We are the government that has increased health care funding from \$17.4 billion to \$20.6 billion. We are the government that recognized that it was time to deal with the pressures in the emergency room, we are the government that is meeting with the hospitals and the ambulance, and we are the government that will continue to find solutions to provide high-quality health services for the people in the province of Ontario.

Mr Hampton: Minister, you can recite all those numbers you want. The fact of the matter is that this problem has gotten out of control, has become a crisis, since you were the government—since you were the government that claimed to have all the answers and went in there and started cutting and slashing and has made whatever was a problem into a crisis.

Minister, you said you were going to hire 10,000 new nurses by year-end. We're now into the middle of December and I want you to go out there and find the 10,000 new nurses you've hired.

You were the minister who said you were going to make sure that \$300 million was available to help with the emergency room crisis, but when you go out there and talk to the hospitals, they can't find the \$300 million. Most of them can't find the money to deal with their continuing operating deficit because you've continued to cut their funds.

Don't recite what happened in 1980 or 1990 and then say somehow that that has led to the debacle you're presiding over. You and your government have been in charge of health care now for almost five years.

The Speaker: Sorry, the member's time is up.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I am very pleased to say that what we are doing is what you did not do. We were the very

last province in all of Canada to embark on restructuring of the health care system. There is a need for modernization. There is a need to strengthen the system. There is a need to make sure that people have services closer to home.

We have about 25 additional dialysis centres; recently, we are opening one in Penetanguishene. These are the improvements that we have made. We have three new comprehensive cardiac centres under construction. We have five new cancer centres under construction. We have increased the funding for cancer, for cardiac, for hip and knee, for dialysis, and we're spending money to construct 20,000 new long-term-care beds because you refused to do any. We've also flowed \$225 million to ensure that we have opened additional beds in hospitals, providing additional community services and interim long-term-care beds. We also will have an additional 6,000 nurses by the end of 1999-2000.

APPOINTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSIONER

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My next question is for the Deputy Premier, and I think we need to go to the Deputy Premier because we need to have a sense of where the government stands.

Deputy Premier, we know that the general government committee has gone through a search for a new Environmental Commissioner for Ontario. There are some things that were very disturbing. I want to ask you this: What would you think of the candidate who put forward their resumé and didn't admit on their resumé, didn't come forward and say: "In 1995 I was a candidate for the Conservative Party. In 1997 I was a candidate for the Conservative Party. I wish to disclose that I am the president of the Conservative riding association in the Premier's own riding. I want to disclose that I used to be an employee of the Ministry of the Environment at one time, but when they downsized the ministry in 1996 they let me go."

What would you think, Deputy Premier, if someone put forward a resumé in a job application and omitted all of those significant details?

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The members will know they have to ask questions relating to a minister's particular portfolio. I missed the first question that came through and didn't hear who the appointment was.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Just a minute, please, member. I'm speaking. Thank you very much.

The member will know it has to be a question to the minister in his or her portfolio.

Mr Hampton: With due respect, Speaker, I would have ordinarily addressed this to the Premier, because I think this is a very important position and institution in the province, and I'm addressing it to the Deputy Premier because I think we need to know where the government stands on these important questions.

The Speaker: The member cannot ask a question that is not in the minister's portfolio. This is not. It is not. It's dealing with the Legislative—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order, please. No, order. I'm trying to clarify it and I'd appreciate it if the members wouldn't shout while I'm trying to clarify it.

It's very clear, you cannot ask questions outside of the minister's responsibility. It is clearly out of order to ask this question. I apologize to the member in missing the first question from the Leader of the Opposition. I didn't hear that it was the Environmental Commissioner until after the minister had gotten up. The question I thought was relating to some appointment. I missed that one. You cannot ask a question that is not part of the minister's portfolio, simple as that.

Does the member have a question?

Mr Hampton: I have a question for the Deputy Premier. This concerns a very important position in the public service of Ontario. It concerns a very important position in terms of protecting the environment in Ontario. I don't need to remind you of your government's terrible record on the environment. I don't need to remind you how important the job of Environmental Commissioner is in protecting the environment. So this is a very important issue for your government and I want to ask you, what do you think when someone comes forward and doesn't put on their resumé that they've been a Conservative candidate in 1995, a Conservative candidate in 1997, they are now the president of the Conservative riding association in the Premier's own riding and that in 1996, when the Ministry of the Environment was forced by your government to downsize, this person was in fact told by the Ministry of the Environment that they were not needed any more?

The Speaker: Come to order. I will say again clearly, this is not a question that relates to anything dealing with the government. It is a part of the Legislative Assembly and the question is not related. It is definitely out of order and I've been very clear. The member can't continue to ask the question to get around it. Now, if he has a question I will allow the question, but very clearly this comes under the responsibility of the Legislature and not the Deputy Premier's portfolio.

1420

Mr Hampton: On a point of order, Speaker: This is an incredibly important position in terms of public policy in Ontario. I am asking the government about—

The Speaker: Order. The member take his seat.

It is a very important position but it does not relate to the government's portfolio. That position does not report to the minister to whom he's asking the question and it is not a part of his ministry and it is clearly out of order. I have ruled very clearly.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

I apologize on the first question. I should have said it when the Leader of the Opposition did it. That one got by. I'm clarifying it now: You have to ask the question to

the minister in his or her responsibility. These positions do not report to the particular minister, they report to this Legislative Assembly and therefore the question is out of order. If you have another question, I will entertain it; if not, we'll go on to the next question.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): On a point of order, Speaker: I'd like you to clarify for the House what the process is here and how appropriate it is for any question to be raised in this House regarding a process that has taken place in camera, where the information is deemed to be confidential and available only to those members of this House who were participating in that. I think we're setting a precedent here that is not good for this House or anyone else applying to a position. I would appeal to you to make a ruling on that very issue.

The Speaker: I will say to the member, I have no idea how the information came out or how the question came. I had no idea who the people were speaking about. But the standing orders are very clear: You have to ask a question relating to the minister's portfolio. These particular positions report to the Legislative Assembly and therefore there is no government minister who is directly responsible.

I will just say very quickly that I have done my ruling. I will entertain points of order, but you should realize you are going to be losing question period. The clock will run.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Speaker: Earlier in the session the government House leader responded to a question and indicated that he had seen the documents related to the background of a number of the candidates. Our understanding was that only the members of that committee could see them. Therefore, if the government is not influencing this process, how did the government House leader know about the background—

The Speaker: I have no idea, and it is not a point of order.

The leader of the third party with a question.

Mr Hampton: My question is for the Acting Premier. I'm asking you, as Acting Premier, about the conduct of members of your government. I'm asking you about the conduct of members of the government caucus. I understand that members of the government caucus have put forward the recommendation of Gordon Miller to be the Environmental Commissioner. I want to ask you, what do you think of your members when they put forward this recommendation?

The Speaker: Order. The member is still going back at the same question and asking something that is not the responsibility of the minister. With all due respect, and I'll say it again very clearly, these positions do not report to any particular government minister; they report to this Legislature. Therefore, it is out of order to ask any minister a question relating to this. I understand there's some concern—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'm not going to shout over the members while I'm trying to explain. Member for Nickel Belt, please come to order.

The member cannot ask a question relating to the Legislative Assembly. If he has another question, he may proceed.

Interjection.

The Speaker: I apologize. I missed that.

Mr Hampton: Acting Premier, I understand that you are responsible for your government. I understand that you are responsible for the conduct of government members. I would like to ask you a question of accountability about Mr Brandt today, but I want to ask you a question of accountability of government members on the general government committee.

My question is this: When someone puts forward a resumé and they don't disclose in that resume a number of material facts and your government still puts forward that—

The Speaker: Order. The member can't get around it and I'm going to be very clear. This is the last time I'm going to ask him; otherwise I will go on to the next question. You cannot ask a question that is not a part—and the time to deal with this is when the motion comes forward dealing with the particular appointment. You cannot ask questions—I want to be very clear—that is not a part—the standing orders are very clear—that are not a part of a ministry. This is very clear. These positions report to the Legislative Assembly, not to the Minister of Finance or, quite frankly, any other ministry of the crown. It reports to the Legislature.

There is a process that is there for everyone and you are not allowed to ask a question. Last opportunity, otherwise I will go to the next party for questions.

Mr Hampton: My question is for the Deputy Premier. A given individual in a 1995 election campaign received contributions from Falconbridge Ltd, Mallette Lumber, Abitibi-Price, Timmins Forest Products, Millson Forestry Service, Timmins Logging Inc, Westland Logging, Gaetan Levesque Logging, Mallette Inc. A given individual in 1997 received large contributions from Grant Lumber, Columbia Forest, Erocon Waste Management, Columbia Forest Products, among other organizations dealing with waste management.

My question is—I'm asking you your opinion here as the head of the government—do you think such an individual would be qualified to be the protector of the environment and the Environmental Commissioner in Ontario?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I have no knowledge of the matters to which the leader of the third party refers to. It's not under my purview.

Mr Hampton: I ask you these questions because government members, members of your caucus, apparently believe that someone of that background is prepared and is acceptable to be the chief environmental watchdog in the province. I ask you again, as the head of the government, as someone who has some responsibility

for the environment: Do you think it is acceptable? Do you think it is a good thing for the protection of the environment in Ontario if someone from that background, with those political connections—do you think they're going to be a good protector of the environment in Ontario?

Hon Mr Eves: I think that individual members of the Legislature, in whatever aspect of their duties, whether they're members of the general government committee or whatever committee, will follow their own conscience and represent their constituents regardless of what political party they represent.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): I have a question for the Minister of Health. You have been entirely dismissive of the medical emergency crisis into which you have plunged our province, so I want to read to you a statement released yesterday by the Specialists Coalition of Ontario. "Specialists have a medical duty to patients to blow the whistle on the Ontario government's refusal to acknowledge what everyone knows is a patient care disaster of unprecedented proportions in Ontario emergency rooms. The public must be told that this government is threatening their health in virtually every community in the province by making insufficient investments to support emergency medical care."

Minister, on your watch you've cut over \$800 million from our hospitals. You have cut over 5,500 acute care beds, resulting in the incidence of ambulances being turned away from our emergency rooms increasing 14-fold.

There is one simple, neat and tidy solution that you can implement effective immediately. We need 400 new beds today. Minister, it's a simple question: Will you give us those 400 new beds we so desperately need?

1430

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The Leader of the Opposition knows full well that unfortunately emergency room pressures are not a new issue in Ontario. In fact, if he reads the newspapers, he will unfortunately discover that from coast to coast in the country called Canada there are health pressures on emergency rooms.

The leader also knows full well that we were the very first government that acknowledged the fact that there were pressures on the system. We were the ones who set up the emergency task force with our partners in the hospital system. We were—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member for Windsor-St Clair, this is his last warning. Minister of Health.

Hon Mrs Witmer: We were the first government to acknowledge the pressures in the system in this province. We were the government that set up the emergency room task force. We were also the government that responded

to every one of the recommendations. We have invested not only \$225 million, but also we have fast-tracked \$97 million to increase the capacity of 56 emergency rooms in Ontario.

We have shown that we care and we are meeting today with the Ontario Hospital Association—

The Speaker: I'm sorry, the minister's time is up.

Mr McGuinty: I want to repeat for the benefit of the minister, because she apparently didn't hear it the first time around, that Ontario doctors are saying, and I quote, that it's time to acknowledge "what everyone knows is a patient care disaster of unprecedented proportions in Ontario emergency rooms." That means this has never, ever happened before in Ontario. This has been cultivated on your watch.

It seems to me that the people of this province are entitled to take comfort in the notion that if somebody in the family experiences a medical emergency—if your mother is involved in a car accident, if your child is found at the bottom of the pool, if your dad is injured on the job—you're entitled to expect that if you're going to be picked up by an ambulance, there will be an emergency department open.

You're letting Ontario families down. There is a neat and simple solution: 400 new beds. Will you give them to us?

Hon Mrs Witmer: The Leader of the Opposition knows full well that we have worked very co-operatively with all our health partners. We have responded to all of their requests and today we are having a further meeting with the Ontario Hospital Association. We were having a meeting with the Toronto Ambulance association. We are very prepared to listen to the proposals and we also have proposals that we're putting on the table. We are prepared to take the further steps that are necessary to ensure that people in this province have access to the system.

Again I would remind the leader of the second party that we are the government which has increased funding for health from \$17.4 billion to \$20.6 billion, with no help from their federal cousins. It's their federal cousins who have cut health care.

SKILLS TRAINING

Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek): My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. In 1996 the Prime Minister promised to transfer responsibility for training and employment services from Ottawa to the provinces. Three years later Ontario stands as the only province that has no such agreement with the federal government. Like every region represented in this House, there are unemployed people in my riding who need training and effective services so they can take full advantage of Ontario's economic boom and our changing economy. Minister, what are you doing to ensure that this federal promise is not broken at the expense of Ontario?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I'd like to thank the member

for Stoney Creek for his question and for bringing this to the attention of the House. I know that every member in this Legislative Assembly has had people who are eligible for EI training dollars who do not have the same amount of accessibility as if they lived in another province.

I think all of us in this Legislative Assembly should be made aware of the fact that those individuals, employers and employees just in this past year contributed \$7.8 billion to the EI fund. In return, benefits paid to employees who are eligible for EI funds were \$3.1 billion. This means that the public of Ontario, employers and employees, are contributing to this massive \$26-billion surplus.

I would like to tell the member that I intend to work with Minister Stewart to do my very best, I hope with the help of every member of this Legislative Assembly, to get a training agreement, a fair training agreement, a fair-share training agreement for our workers in Ontario.

Mr Clark: In Ontario, we make up 40% of the national workforce and 55% of the national GDP. Our economy has a high demand for skills in fields like construction and manufacturing. Ontario workers need fair funding of training programs to allow them to upgrade their skills, obtain better jobs in a growing and changing economy and, ultimately, to better provide for their families.

The federal government spends an average of \$2,695 for every unemployed person in Newfoundland and only \$1,190 for an unemployed person in Ontario. I don't understand how the 100 Ontario members of Parliament in the federal government can justify this policy.

What are you doing to ensure that Ontario receives the adequate funding it deserves from Ottawa?

Interjections.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: I am appalled, at this moment in time, as we get a sensible, responsible question from the member from Stoney Creek, that the Liberal members of this Parliament, of this House, are laughing and heckling. I would suggest that every single unemployed worker, any person eligible for EI training who is not getting it now, should pick up the phone and phone their Liberal MPP, who thinks we should sign an agreement that would give our people less access to training than any other—

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): Everybody else has. Why don't you?

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Member for Kingston and the Islands, please come to order.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: Mr Speaker, I thank you for that. The member for Kingston and the Islands doesn't really think that the people in Kingston should have the same level of access to labour market training that the people in New Brunswick and the people in Quebec have. That is wrong.

I will be working with I hope a more responsible minister, who also represents the people of Ontario, to get a fair labour market agreement, as the Premier—

The Speaker: The minister's time is up.

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: I believe that my privilege as a member of this House has been abused by the minister's making insinuations about the people in Kingston and the Islands. The people of Kingston and the Islands want you to sign this agreement—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. We're at the end of the session. The tempers are up. I would ask all members to try to consider. We're coming to a close. I understand—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member for Kingston and the Islands, come to order.

I would ask all members to try as best they can to not be confrontational. We're coming to the end of a session. Tempers are heated. I would ask all members to please consider their tone in this House. I understand that towards the end of sessions we are going to get this way, but it is not helpful when we're shouting across and then we get into the points of order.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): I have a question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. This morning I attended a meeting with city of Toronto councillors. They confirmed some rather disturbing information, and I'd like to ask you about it today.

Recently you signed the devolution agreement on social housing with the federal government. That agreement produced an immediate savings of \$85 million. According to your own agreement, every penny of these so-called savings is to be reinvested in housing. The first \$50 million has been committed to a future rent supplement program. But we had confirmed for us today that you've skimmed \$25 million off the top for your own cost-cutting measures, and there's another \$10 million that you won't even talk about.

In the words of the Toronto councillors, "This is piracy." How do you explain the fact that the ink has only been dry for one month and you've broken your own agreement at a time when there's an affordable housing crisis in the province? Why are you taking \$35 million already in housing out of that program in this province?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): The honourable member should work a bit harder to get his facts straight. I'm very proud to say this government was able to sign that agreement with the federal government, and we immediately dedicated funds where they are needed: \$30 million is going for capital improvements on the housing stock that is going to be devolved to the level of government which best has the ability to deliver that—the municipalities—and another \$50 million going for rental supplements so an additional 10,000 hard-working families here in Ontario have the ability to access rental

supplements. That's our record, a record of which we're particularly proud.

1440

Mr Caplan: Minister, there's a \$143-million windfall to your government. The facts are clear that you view this only as a cash grab for the Harris government at the expense of municipal taxpayers.

Here's another example: During estimates, your deputy minister indicated that you would be transferring a significant portion of the risk and future costs of this housing portfolio on to municipalities. In your agreement, you negotiated \$58 million towards the costs associated with these risks. To date, you've committed more than half to a reserve fund that you mentioned earlier.

Minister, what do you have to say to municipal taxpayers who have to assume all of these costs when you're driving the getaway car with the money? What are you doing with the money? Why won't you spend these housing dollars on housing? Instead, why are you putting them in your own pocketbook?

Hon Mr Clement: I know the honourable member has difficulty understanding sound management practices because he's a member of that caucus, but the answer to his question is sound management practices. Here's a case where we are putting aside reserves for the benefit of the municipalities to ensure there is money there for when a riskier situation takes place in terms of mortgage rates and interest rates. So we are practising sound management policies. We are flowing through the money for capital expenditures, \$30 million. We are flowing through the money for 10,000 hard-working Ontario families so the rental supplement is there. And we are putting aside a little bit of money to manage the risk in the future. That's called sound management practices. Perhaps the honourable member should learn a little bit about it and read up on it. Maybe it would help him in the future.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Most recently, I read that more than 11,000 people stopped relying on welfare in the month of November. This marks the 22nd consecutive month that the number of people on welfare has declined. A total of 462,790 people have left the welfare rolls since June 1995.

My constituents in Thornhill consistently tell me they are pleased with this progress and the direction, but I find it hard to believe the decline is so consistent. Minister, how can you explain the steady, ongoing, 22-month-long series of declines?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): The best way to explain the dramatic and consistent decline in our welfare rates is the consistent support that this government and this caucus have given to welfare reform in Ontario. In 1995 we set out to fix a

system that was out of control. When we took office, Ontario had more than a million people trapped in a system that wasn't working. That means more than 12% of the population was trapped in a bad system.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Baird: I know the members opposite in the Liberal Party don't support workfare and they laugh at the success of helping people move from welfare to work. Under their leadership, Ontario went from having one of the best welfare caseloads in the country to one of the highest. They consistently aren't supporting work for welfare. They believe in cottageware; they believe in the money-for-nothing welfare policies of the past. I can indicate to the member opposite and her constituents that we won't turn the clock back.

Mrs Molinari: As we know, when someone experiences a major change in their life, it's not always easy. Families with children need help when moving from welfare to work. In York region alone, as of October 1999, the decline has been a total of 6,690 people who have left the welfare rolls. This is a 62.2% decrease since June 1995.

What are you doing to make the transition from welfare to work as smooth and effective as possible for all the families that are breaking out of this cycle, not only those in York region but all over the province?

Hon Mr Baird: Providing supports to help people move from welfare to work is an important priority, I know, not only for people in York region but for people right across Ontario. That's why we've undertaken a number of initiatives. We're giving people experience through community participation. We're giving people encouragement and incentive through our earn back program. We're giving people training through learnfare.

We've also done a lot to try to help low- and modest-income families break the cycle of welfare dependency. We've put in place a number of supports. Through our earn back program people can access supports such as travel costs, minor fees for certification and other safety-related equipment like shoes and whatnot to help them get the support they need.

We've also been leading advocates with the federal government to try to encourage the national child benefit to be an incentive to low- and modest-income working families. This government has provided additional support through the Ontario child care supplement for working families, providing an additional \$200 million to low- and modest-income families to help them escape the trap of welfare.

We're committed to continuing with welfare programs. We're committed to help more people move from welfare to work.

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, today there was yet another demonstration against the shameful way tenants and the homeless are

being treated by your government. It's almost Christmas but in a Scrooge-like manner, you, Minister, and your government have celebrated by raiding the pockets of tenants and giving it to the landlords. In Toronto this year, thanks to your legislation, the landlords have claimed at least, I say as a minimum, \$282 million out of the pockets of tenants. Minister, why have you grabbed \$280 million from tenants to give to landlords?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I assume the honourable member knows how the Tenant Protection Act works and how it worked in the past, and maybe if he searched his memory and perhaps his conscience he would also understand that under the old systems that were in place, the tenants were subjected to greater rent hikes and less accountability by the landlord than under the current Tenant Protection Act.

We have a system that is in place now. For next year the maximum rent increase is 2.6%, which is the lowest it's been in many years, certainly under the course of the government with which he participated. Those increases are there to ensure that the capital stock is preserved and to ensure that the management is operational on behalf of the tenants. But certainly the system is working better now than it had under the previous 10 years of previous governments.

Mr Marchese: It's such shameful garbage that I have to hear from this minister. It's shameful to me. The minister ought to know, if he doesn't but I suspect he does, that in Toronto tenants are getting hit this year and the past with rent increases of \$1,128 a year. This figure is based on Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. He ought to know that, and if he doesn't I have told him today. People who have to move are getting hit often with double and/or triple that amount of money. Some of those people or many of those people are ending up on the street. So I say, and many are saying, that Toronto in 1999 is becoming like the London of Mr. Scrooge.

Minister, stop grabbing money from tenants and giving it to landlords. How and when are you going to start helping tenants?

Hon Mr Clement: We're trying to dismantle the failed system that we inherited from the Liberals and the NDP as quickly as we can, and if the honourable member would help us out on that, that would be helpful. That certainly would be helpful, to help the tenants in our society.

I would go back to the record and indicate that under the previous Liberal government we had in this province, rental housing starts fell by 21% and total housing starts declined by 40.5% between 1987 and 1990. Under the NDP, when they failed to act to improve our rental housing situation, rental housing starts plummeted by 74.4%. That's the legacy unfortunately of the failed NDP-Liberal policy. We are trying our best to dismantle that failed policy as quickly as possible. We have made some inroads certainly. As I said, the new Tenant Protection Act has greater protections than we've had before. But certainly any help that the honourable member can give

us to dismantle what didn't work under his regime would be very helpful to this government.

1450

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): My question is for the Minister of Health. This morning, you announced new money for psychiatric and mental health funding. However, no one in my area can fully comprehend the pittance of money that you've put into the London-St Thomas area.

Minister, I was told that 20% of the beds in the St Thomas and London psychiatric hospitals are vacant, yet these hospitals have waiting lists. Over the past two months my staff has been trying to verify this, but the answers from your ministry have been appalling: "I've been directed not to do that." "Communications come from the minister's office." "I'm not supposed to answer that question." "We've lost the information." When I contact your ministry, I get the same runaround.

Minister, why has your staff been engaging in a cover-up? What do you have to hide? How many vacant beds are there in the St Thomas and London psychiatric hospitals, hospitals with waiting lists?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I was very pleased this morning to make an announcement that builds on the creation of a modern mental health system in the province of Ontario. I announced an additional \$19.1 million. That increases our total on new mental health funding in the province of Ontario for people using services to approximately \$150 million.

As the member opposite knows, we have done an extensive consultation. As a result of the inputs, we are creating a system that focuses on prevention, community services, and of course in-bed patient services. I was very pleased this morning to indicate that as a result of the funding, there would be 140 additional beds made available for forensic, acute and children's mental health. As well, we now have 51 assertive community treatment teams in the province of Ontario. These provide 24-hour support to individuals to allow them to live in their communities.

Mr Peters: I would have appreciated an answer to the number of vacant beds in those two hospitals. But today's announcements are a piecemeal solution to a systematic problem. Where are the supportive housing units that patients need as you close down beds? Where is your vision for mental health in this province?

The St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital and London Psychiatric Hospital were originally intended to be closed this year, but right before the election your government announced a reprieve to 2003. You said this was to ensure that adequate community supports were in place. Well, Minister, you announce more money today, you announce that you're going to work towards new community supports, but answer me this: Yesterday the St Thomas hospital was told that their community

kitchen was going to be closed down. This community kitchen is a dictionary definition of what it's all about for community supports. Today you announce that you're investing in community-based programs, but tomorrow your government is shutting one down.

Why are you covering up the empty beds at the hospital and leaving people on waiting lists without good community supports? Why are you breaking your promises? Why are you betraying the patients? Why more and more Tory doubletalk?

Hon Mrs Witmer: As I indicated in my remarks, our government actually undertook an extensive review of the mental health system. We've worked with our stakeholders. We've had tremendous appreciation expressed by stakeholders throughout the province. In fact, as a result of the initiatives that we've undertaken, we have had considerable interest and visits from people in communities throughout the entire world who are supporting the progress we have made to ensure that we can relocate people in the community and provide them with the appropriate support.

As the member opposite knows, we did provide \$45 million for supportive housing for the seriously mentally ill, and we will continue to do what is needed to ensure that appropriate funding can be provided to provide the continuum of care that is needed to ensure we have a modern mental health system that responds to the unique needs of individuals throughout Ontario.

This morning's announcement provided additional beds and monies for Ottawa, for Whitby, for Hamilton, for London, for Sarnia. One of the very significant parts of the announcement this morning was new funding and new beds for children's mental health. Those were very well received by the stakeholders this morning.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The time for oral questions is over.

Mr Peters: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Last week, my motives were impugned by the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation.

On December 7, a letter was sent to the minister's MPP liaison on behalf of a teacher in my constituency. The letter clearly stated that I was acting on behalf of the constituent. Unfortunately, the minister used this letter to impugn my motives. She implied my support for the misappropriation of tax dollars known as My Ontario Millennium Memento. This program is a misallocation of scarce government resources. It is wrong that students who do not have dictionaries should be couriered copies of the—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Government members will come to order. I'm hearing the point of order. Thank you. Go ahead.

Mr Peters: Thank you, Speaker. The minister and her staff knew the true situation—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Now the opposition, order.

Mr Peters: —and took my comments out of context. My motives have been called into question for perform-

ing my job. By requesting these materials, I chose to serve my constituent rather than my self-interest. I wish the minister would do the same.

I would like to read into the record this letter from the teacher:

“Please find enclosed the copies of this waste of money that were delivered to me. I find it offensive that my request was used as a way of defending this boondoggle in the Legislature. The minister should be ashamed of herself. Steve Peters was putting my interest ahead of his self-interest, and I wish that the government would do the same.”

The Speaker: I listened carefully and it's not a point of order.

MEMBER'S QUESTION

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I thought I would not rise again on a point of order, but the leader of the third party persisted in asking questions with regard to the appointment of the Environmental Commissioner earlier today in question period. You rightly pointed out, as I tried to point out, that this is a function of the Legislative Assembly and no minister of the crown, but the leader of the third party persisted and continued to ask questions on the matter.

I'd like you, sir, to rule on whether his question, which in fact eventually got to the Deputy Premier, was in order or not.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I thank the member. I will clarify it. I will be very, very strict. I listened to the question and I think the question that he eventually put was marginal, but he did get around it. As a supplementary he did push it again. I missed the first one from the Leader of the Opposition. I will be very clear in the future. You cannot ask a question that does not relate to his or her portfolio. I will try to listen very carefully. On some occasions, and quite frankly in this case, I didn't know until halfway through the question that they were talking about the Environmental Commissioner.

There will be times when I miss it, and when I do that, I will try and correct the proceedings, because I will make some mistakes. But I want to be very clear, as I tried to be for the leader of the third party. What happens is, it's difficult when a Speaker misses it on one occasion and then the members rightly begin to push the envelope a little bit, but I will be very clear. I will listen very carefully. You cannot ask a question unless it relates to his or her portfolio. This has come up in the past where government members have done it, and I missed it again. I will try to be very careful in listening. One of the problems you've got is when members yelling and screaming, it's very difficult to watch who's yelling and screaming and listen at the same time, but I will try to do that.

I say to the government House leader, I will listen very carefully. You have to ask a question relating to his

or her portfolio, and anything relating to the Legislative Assembly does not fall into that category. I will try to be a little bit quicker in getting up on that.

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member opposite, I think, has impugned my motives and misrepresented what I said. I would just like to read the letter into the record one more time. This is from a secondary school teacher and it says—

The Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Sit down, please. It's not a point of order.

Interjections.

1500

The Speaker: Order. What I attempt to do on a point of order is bend over backwards to try and allow the member to make it. If I see any particular member attempting to abuse it, as maybe will come, and if people are taking liberties with my good nature, I will attempt to then shut them down. I try to let the points of order go on and listen very carefully. The problem you have when you do that is that then other side comes back, and that's the situation we're in. I will say very clearly that I've tried to be very good and I bend over backwards on points of order because I treat them very seriously, but I will not get into situations we sometimes do where people are correcting the record.

We've had some occasions when the opposition got up because they didn't like the answer going back and forth. From now on I'll attempt to be very clear and listen to points of order because I treat them very seriously. But if it gets abused, I will have to shut people down a lot quicker. I would appreciate everybody's co-operation on this matter. There is plenty of opportunity in the debates to go back and forth on this issue. I would appreciate it if we would do that in that venue and not as points of order so that we don't keep going back and forth if it's not a point of order.

PETITIONS

MEDICAL LABORATORIES

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): This petition is to the Parliament of Ontario. It reads like this:

“Whereas the Ontario government has recently imposed a retroactive cap on revenue earned by medical laboratories for services provided under the health insurance plan; and

“Whereas the Ontario government has also required these businesses to refund revenue for services rendered in previous years where the amount of that amount revenue exceeds the retroactively imposed cap for those years; and

“Whereas this legislation amounts to expropriation of economic rights without adequate compensation or due process of law; and

“Whereas the greatest incentive to the provision of efficient and quality services and products by the private sector is competition and the ability to make a profit; and

“Whereas the removal of these incentives by government negatively affects all of society and particularly patients in need; and

“Whereas this type of legislation also unfairly discriminates against one sector of the society;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

“That adequate protection of property rights is needed to ensure that government cannot erode the property rights of certain sectors of society without fair compensation and due process of law.”

I will affix my signature to this. I'm in total agreement with it.

KARLA HOMOLKA

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): To continue the process of submitting petitions to the Legislative Assembly with respect to Karla Homolka, I would like to read the following 400-signature petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Karla Homolka and Paul Bernardo were responsible for terrorizing entire communities in southern Ontario; and

“Whereas the Ontario government of the day made a deal with the devil with Karla Homolka resulting in a sentence that does not truly make her pay for her crimes; and

“Whereas our communities have not yet fully recovered from the trauma and sadness caused by Karla Homolka; and

“Whereas Karla Homolka believes that she should be entitled to passes to leave prison with an escort; and

“Whereas the people of Ontario believe that criminals should be forced to serve sentences that reflect the seriousness of their crimes;

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

“That the government of Ontario will:

“Do everything within its power to ensure that Karla Homolka serves her full sentence;

“Continue to reform parole and make it more difficult for serious offenders to return to our streets;

“Fight the federal government's plan to release up to 1,600 more convicted criminals on to Ontario streets; and

“Ensure that the Ontario government's sex offender registry is functioning as quickly as possible.”

I affix my signature to this petition.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a petition for the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

“Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

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

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

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

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

I'm proud to affix my signature to this petition.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I have a number of petitions entitled “Save Our High Schools.” They're signed by students from high schools in Port Dover, Valley Heights, Waterford and Delhi, and as well are signed by people from those towns and neighbouring towns.

“Whereas several area high schools have been threatened with closure; and

“Whereas the Grand Erie District School Board, the Brant/Haldimand-Norfolk Catholic District School Board and Fanshawe College all have proposals to construct new school buildings in Simcoe; and

“Whereas many viable options and solutions have been proposed and publicly discussed but not enacted;

“We, the undersigned, beseech the province of Ontario to take extraordinary steps to conduct an administrative audit and mediate a solution among the Grand Erie District School Board, the Brant/Haldimand-Norfolk Catholic District School Board, Fanshawe College and other key stakeholders to provide a student-based approach utilizing existing school board and possibly municipal infrastructure.”

I agree with this petition and hereby affix my name to it.

MILLENNIUM MEMENTO

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Conservative government carelessly wasted more than \$2.5 million of taxpayers’ money on producing the My Ontario Millennium Memento souvenir; and

“Whereas we feel that \$2.5 million would have been better spent on textbooks, computers and curriculum teaching materials which are sorely lacking in Ontario schools today; and

“Whereas students and parents want materials in their classrooms which are not blatantly partisan in nature as is this souvenir; and

“Whereas students and parents are participating in the Return to Sender program by returning thousands of unwanted copies of the millennium souvenir to Mike Harris; and

“Whereas this action by the Conservative government demonstrates their disregard for the priorities of Ontarians; and

“Whereas 500 hard-working Ontario families had to work one full year to pay their provincial income taxes to cover the printing of this misguided project;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to condemn the skewed priorities of the Mike Harris government and demand that Mike Harris issue an apology to the people of Ontario for wasting taxpayers’ money.”

Of course I affix my signature to this petition.

KARLA HOMOLKA

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Karla Homolka and Paul Bernardo were responsible for terrorizing entire communities in southern Ontario; and

“Whereas the Ontario government of the day made a deal with the devil with Karla Homolka resulting in a sentence that does not truly make her pay for her crimes; and

“Whereas our communities have not yet fully recovered from the trauma and sadness caused by Karla Homolka; and

“Whereas Karla Homolka believes that she should be entitled to pass to leave prison with an escort; and

“Whereas the people of Ontario believe that criminals should be forced to serve sentences that reflect the seriousness of their crimes;

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

“That the government of Ontario will:

“Do everything within its power to ensure that Karla Homolka serves her full sentence;

“Continue to reform parole and make it more difficult for serious offenders to return to our streets;

“Fight the federal government’s plan to release up to 1,600 more convicted criminals on to Ontario streets; and

“Ensure that the Ontario government’s sex offender registry is functioning as quickly as possible.”

I have affixed my name to this petition and submit it to you today.

1510

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

“Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

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

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

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

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

It signed by another 45 concerned constituents, and I’ll affix my signature in full agreement with their concerns.

MILLENNIUM MEMENTO

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): This petition is from high school students in my riding.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas quality education is one of the fundamental necessities of a healthy society; and

“Whereas the quality of education has decreased as millions of dollars in funding have been cut;

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

“That the spending of millions of dollars on the My Ontario booklet was a gross misuse of funds, taking into

consideration that almost every classroom in Ontario is in dire need of supplies and updated resources.”

I affix my signature to this petition.

KARLA HOMOLKA

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Karla Homolka and Paul Bernardo were responsible for terrorizing entire communities in southern Ontario; and

“Whereas the Ontario government of the day made a deal with the devil with Karla Homolka resulting in a sentence that does not truly make her pay for her crimes; and

“Whereas our communities have not yet fully recovered from the trauma and sadness caused by Karla Homolka; and

“Whereas Karla Homolka believes that she should be entitled to passes to leave prison with an escort; and

“Whereas the people of Ontario believe that criminals should be forced to serve sentences that reflect the seriousness of their crimes;

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

“That the government of Ontario will:

“Do everything within its power to ensure that Karla Homolka serves her full sentence;

“Continue to reform parole and make it more difficult for serious offenders to return to our streets;

“Fight the federal government’s plan to release up to 1,600 more convicted criminals on to Ontario streets; and

“Ensure that the Ontario government’s sex offender registry is functioning as quickly as possible.”

I affix my signature to it.

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Harris government has eliminated tenant protection and removed rent control for vacant apartments;

“Whereas under these conditions landlords have an incentive to force current tenants out of their apartments;

“Whereas the use of the maximum rent provision under Mike Harris has become a form of harassment;

“Whereas rents are increasing to unaffordable levels as a result of maximum rent;

“Whereas some tenants are being forced out of their homes and having to choose between rent and food;

“We, the undersigned, call upon the Ontario government to abolish maximum rent and roll back the increases that have occurred under this provision since this new so-called Tenant Protection Act.”

I’m in agreement with the hundreds of petitioners, on behalf of the 3,000 people in my riding who have had rent increases up to 38%.

MARRIAGE

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): “To the Legislature of Ontario:

“Whereas the majority of Canadians believe that fundamental matters of social policy should be decided by elected members of Parliament and the legislatures, and not the unelected judiciary; and

“Whereas the Supreme Court of Canada in the M. and H. case has rejected biology, tradition and societal norms to redefine the term ‘spouse’ to include the non-procreative partnerships of homosexual couples, and has effectively granted these relationships ‘equivalent-to-married’ status; and

“Whereas the court’s decision will devalue the institution of marriage, and it is the duty of the Legislature to ensure that marriage, as it has always been known and understood, be preserved and protected;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature to use all possible legislative and administrative measures, including invoking section 33 of the charter (the ‘notwithstanding’ clause), to preserve and protect the commonly understood, exclusive definitions of ‘spouse,’ ‘marriage’ and ‘family’ in all areas of provincial law.”

Mr Speaker, I’ll sign my name to that as well.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

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

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

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

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

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

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

“We, the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately upgrade Highway 401 to at least a six-lane highway with fully 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.”

It’s signed by a number of residents from Chatham, Blenheim, Charing Cross and Ridgeway, and I affix my name to it.

VISITORS

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In the members' gallery we have the honour of having a couple from St Isidore de Prescott, Mr and Mrs Edouard Leblanc. Edouard and Aline Leblanc were chosen among 460 people to visit the Ontario Legislative Assembly on the occasion of the international year of the seniors. This visit was made possible with the partnership of VIA Rail. I would ask that the members of this assembly welcome them. It is their first visit to the Legislative Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): That is not a point of order, but we're pleased to be able to welcome you to our assembly today.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 27, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act and the MPPs Pension Act, when Bill 27 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 for third reading;

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

That the order for third reading of the bill may then immediately be called; and

That one hour shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill after which 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 division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Mr Klees moves government notice of motion 24. Mr Klees.

Hon Mr Klees: I believe the order of debate resumes with the Liberal Party.

The Deputy Speaker: It wouldn't usually.

The Chair recognizes the member for Wentworth-Burlington.

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth-Burlington): It's my pleasure to start off the debate on this resolution. As you're aware, one of the provisions of this bill is that people with financial hardship or shortened life expectancy would benefit tremendously from this bill.

All the members in the House have had considerable correspondence for many years from people in that very situation and they are most anxious to see this bill pass as expeditiously as possible. I have an entire file back at the Ministry of Finance of letters from people who are in desperate straits, who are in financial hardship and who have been lobbying and requesting and giving submissions for this very type of legislation for years. Now that we're here, they're quite anxious to have the bill proceed. I hope I'm not being too facetious when I say this, but it would be a very nice Christmas present to many of these people in severe financial hardship.

1520

I've noted that the members opposite have no trouble with the actual bulk of this bill, the Pension Benefits Act. They're holding up the bill because of some reservations they have with the MPPs Pension Act. From the correspondence and communications I've had with the individuals involved, those people would find it quite disillusioning to have this bill held up due to some reservations regarding the MPPs Pension Act.

Interjection.

Mr Skarica: The member opposite is saying my name in somewhat of an exaggerated manner. I have not had any of those people say, "Maybe you should hold up this bill and make me wait even longer for my financial hardship application."

What the legislation provides is that Ontarians faced with terminal illness would be given access to retirement funds. Individuals faced with severe financial hardship or shortened life expectancy would have easier access to locked-in retirement accounts as a result of this pension legislation. As Minister Ernie Eves indicated, "We have committed in the 1998 budget that this government is taking steps to ensure that Ontarians faced with difficult circumstances are permitted to access locked-in retirement funds."

As I indicated last time when I spoke, my former colleagues, who are not here, Mr Grimmer and Mr Terence Young—very fine members, and we miss them on this side of the House—basically aren't here because of the reduction in politicians in the House. Politicians were reduced from 130 to 103, and they were two of the 27 people who couldn't be here, and not because they weren't fine members. Actually, I'm quite confident that both of them would have been re-elected had we had 130 seats. They have sacrificed their jobs in order to save money for the taxpayer and make our government leaner and more effective and cheaper in the long run for taxpayers.

To go back to this legislation, Mr Eves indicated when the bill was first introduced:

"If passed by the Legislature"—and it's hopeful that this legislation will be passed before Christmas—"this bill and accompanying regulations would permit persons facing considerably shortened life expectancy due to critical illness to withdraw all monies from their pensions or locked-in accounts. Those in financial hardship would apply to the superintendent of financial services of

Ontario to determine whether they meet the necessary criteria to access some or all of their locked-in funds.”

This is not a new idea or, to be frank, not even an idea that originates with our government. This is an idea that has already gained favour in other provinces in this country, particularly out west, and has worked very well for people in hardship.

During the recent consultations that were carried on by my colleagues and good friends Mr Young and Mr Grimmett, requests were made repeatedly to them to provide flexibility in pension legislation. One of the organizations that I've spoken to personally is the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, CARP. I spoke to Lillian Morgenthau on a number of occasions and she had this to say about this legislation: “CARP congratulates the Ontario government for adopting our recommendations to do away with the paternalistic policies on locked-in funds. CARP has been working to persuade provincial governments to change the regulations on life income funds since 1997.” I did talk to her back in 1997 and she indicated her concerns at that time that many of her members were facing these kinds of hardships and felt very constrained.

As everyone knows, the 1990s have been a time of the bull market and many of the members, when they reached age 80, were forced to buy annuities at a relatively low interest rate, when they could have invested those monies in the stock market and reaped a considerably greater reward.

I remember at that time meeting with her, and she indicated what her concern was. At that time I wasn't the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, but I met Mr Eves and relayed those concerns. It's obvious that he listened because, after those meetings—and I'm sure other members lobbied him as well, probably not only from the government side but from the opposition side—he then spoke to Mr Young and Mr Grimmett, who were the parliamentary assistants to the Minister of Finance, and they went out and did consultations, including with CARP and, as a result, we have this legislation.

Ms Morgenthau has this to say as well:

“We are very pleased that the proposed legislative changes will provide Ontarians with life income funds with an alternative, so that they will no longer be forced to convert to life annuities and will have more flexible access to withdraw money from them. We trust that the other provinces and territories which have not yet changed their regulations on LIFs”—life income funds—“will follow Ontario's lead in this matter.”

Some of the highlights of this legislation are as follows. Individuals are being provided with more flexibility in determining their annual withdrawals from locked-in retirement savings. The reform package streamlines pension administration and provides for the harmonization of pension rules with other Canadian jurisdictions. It is expected that the regulations regarding shortened life expectancy, the locked-in retirement income fund and the withdrawal of small balances will be

enacted early in the new year. The streamlining and harmonization reforms will be effective on proclamation.

I would like to give details of some of the provisions of the bill.

Financial hardship: Funds in locked-in retirement accounts would be available to individuals in cases of serious financial hardship. The individuals would apply to the superintendent of financial services of Ontario, and the application to withdraw funds due to serious financial hardship will be based on specific criteria to be contained in regulation and announced in the new year. In fact, those provisions are wider than exist in some of the other provinces in this country.

Shortened life expectancy: Individuals faced with shortened life expectancy due to a critical illness or disability would be entitled to withdraw all monies from their locked-in accounts.” That would include LIRAs, LIFs and LRIFs. Application can be made to the financial institution where the account is held. A similar provision will be implemented for persons no longer employed but entitled to benefits from a pension plan.

Elimination of the required annuity purchase: A new locked-in retirement income fund would permit retirees to base their withdrawals on their actual investment returns. Unlike the former life income funds, an LRIF would not require individuals to purchase a life annuity. That was a problem, as I said before, when individuals were basically forced to buy an annuity. This was a low interest rate environment, which meant that they had limited returns on that money. In a low interest rate environment, with the stock market booming, obviously it would be a much better investment to invest those in mutual funds or some type of investment that would take some advantage of the bull market that has been raging in North America for almost 20 years now. Retirement monies would be freely transferable among LIRAs until age 69, and among LIFs and LRIFs.

When you pierce through all the terminology, what it really means is that it gives flexibility to people to invest as they see fit. It would give them a free range of how they invest and will allow them to maximize their returns, and ultimately then to maximize the amount of money they can withdraw from their retirement funds. For those who do not withdraw the maximum permitted, the LRIF would also provide the owner with the option to carry forward unused withdrawal room from the current year to future years.

I'd like to deal briefly with locked-in accounts with small balances.

Upon reaching age 55, individuals who have a total of less than 40% (currently \$15,000) of the year's maximum pensionable earnings—it's called YMPE and it's a formula that's used under the Canada pension plan—would be able to take this money in their locked-in accounts and they may unlock the entire amount if the amount is small enough.

1530

What is the applicability of federal investment rules? Ontario is harmonizing its pension investment standards

by adopting the federal investment rules. I might indicate that I reviewed the consultations by Mr Young and Mr Grimmett, and financial institution after financial institution indicated that a great difficulty for them was the cost of administration where every province has different rules and different ways of doing things. For them, that meant a lot of duplication and a lot of work that really is not necessary.

Ontario has looked at the other provinces and asked: How can we harmonize the rules so that what we do makes sense and, at the same time, cuts duplication for the variety of institutions involved in the pension business? Virtually all those institutions were quite ecstatic and quite happy with the prospect of harmonizing the rules. I anticipate they'll be very happy with this legislation.

Briefly then, what does harmonizing mean? The harmonizing initiative would update investment regulations to reflect the realities of the current marketplace, including the development of new financial products and administrative procedures. As well as Ontario, the four western provinces have adopted the same investment standards, so that we now have five provinces using the same rules.

Just a couple more details about the streamlining of pension administration: A number of reforms in the bill will be implemented to streamline and simplify pension administration. These reforms, as I indicated, respond to the submissions Mr Young and Mr Grimmett received in consultations in 1999. The Financial Services Commission of Ontario, FSCO, will provide details of these streamlining reforms through their Internet Web site and through the Pension Bulletin early in the new year.

Interjection.

Mr Skarica: I agree with the opposition that it's all pretty good stuff.

I'd just like to go into some details of the Pension Benefits Act and then briefly touch on the MPPs Pension Act, as I'm sure the opposition wants me to do. Currently, a pension plan is not eligible for registration under the Pension Benefits Act unless it is administered by a person who is described in a list in section 8 of the act. An amendment to that subsection expands the list of persons to include one or more employers, where there are multiple employers, and an administrator appointed by the Superintendent of Financial Services under section 71 of the act.

Currently, the administrator of a pension plan is required to apply to register it within 60 days after the plan is established. Section 9 of the act is amended to require that the application be made within a set period specified in the regulations.

Under subsection 29(1) of the act, the administrator of a pension plan is required to make certain documents and information about the plan available for inspection by the persons listed in the subsection. An amendment expands that list of persons to include an employer, a person who makes contributions on behalf of an employer, the agent of either and such other persons as specified in the regulations.

Section 42 of the act permits the transfer of the commuted value of a former member's deferred pension into a prescribed retirement savings arrangement. An amendment to that section addresses the situation that arises when the commuted value is greater than the amount the former member is permitted under the Income Tax Act. This permits a transfer into the prescribed retirement savings arrangement. Under the amendment, the amount in excess of the maximum permitted under that act shall be paid as a lump sum to the former member.

There is a variety of other sections, but I don't think I need to go through them now. The point of these sections is to streamline and harmonize the pension plan with other legislation in the country. The end result will be that administering pension plans through financial institutions throughout Ontario will be a lot cheaper and a lot easier. By harmonizing with the four western provinces, you'll have five provinces. I'm not sure what that means in total pension monies, but it's probably pretty substantial—60% or 70% of the pension monies in the country are now under a streamlined arrangement.

How is the MPPs Pension Act, 1996, affected?

When it was enacted, the MPPs Pension Act, 1996, required the transfer of the commuted value of each MPP's pension benefit for the period before June 8, 1995, to a locked-in retirement account. Under section 21 of the act, the account had to meet the requirements of the Pension Benefits Act. In addition, the act specified that payments could not be paid from the account to an individual until the applicable MPP ceased to be a member of the assembly or reached 55 years of age, whichever was the later. Amendments to section 21 of the act eliminate the requirement for the locked-in retirement account to comply with the requirements of the Pension Benefits Act.

The terms of a locked-in retirement account that was established before the bill is passed shall be amended at the request of the account holder to remove restrictions on withdrawals from the account and to remove other restrictions that were imposed to comply with the Pension Benefits Act, such as requirements relating to the payment of death benefits and joint and survivor pension benefits. However, the bill specifies two restrictions with respect to these amendments: a member's locked-in retirement account must comply with the requirements of the Income Tax Act (Canada)—which is contrary to what was said by one of the Liberal members the other day—and an individual may make withdrawals from the account only after he or she ceases to be an MPP or reaches the age of 55, whichever is the later.

The amendments may be made only with the prior written consent of the spouse or same-sex partner of the account holder. These conditions also apply to a life income fund, as described in regulations under the Pension Benefits Act, that was established pursuant to a locked-in retirement account entered into before the amendments came into force.

Currently, subsection 27(2) of the act specifies that the amount in a member's money purchase account when he or she ceases to be an MPP can be used to purchase his or her pension. An amendment provides, instead, that the amount that can be used to purchase the pension is the amount in the account when the pension was purchased.

Basically the bottom line of the legislation is that it provides long-sought-after streamlining of pension regulations. As I've indicated, I've reviewed the pretty extensive consultations that were conducted by Mr Grimmer and Mr Young. Financial institution after financial institution was quite enthusiastic and quite desirous of these changes. It will result in substantial administrative savings to those institutions. The result, then, is that will mean that the people who hold the pension benefits or are entitled to the pension benefits will in fact get extra monies out of the account that heretofore, before this legislation, have gone to administration.

As well, all the MPPs in this House know and have had contact with numerous individuals in Ontario who are in financial straits, who are in difficulty and who have shortened life expectancy and have severe financial hardship. I know of one situation where a person is about to lose their house, has enough monies in their pension to easily pay off their mortgage but can't access it under the current rules. Once that is changed, that person then will be able to access that and it will solve his problem of losing his house, which is a very significant problem, I'm sure everyone would agree.

In total this legislation is a good news story and provides changes that have been long sought after by both financial institutions and members of the general public who are suffering financial hardship. I know those individuals are quite anxious to have this legislation passed and this motion will get them along that way.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, for allowing me to participate in this debate.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): I am happy to speak today. We are on a time allocation motion, which allows us to potentially deviate and discuss the whole issue of allocation motions and the time allowed for debate. I think we ought to use time in the House to debate issues that are of real relevance on the ground in all of our ridings. To that extent I want to tell you a story about something that happened in my riding. I hope that all the members of this House might take the time after the House rises over the holidays and in the first quarter of the new year to find out if there are issues such as this in their own home ridings.

I had become aware only in the last couple of months, in speaking with teachers, with guidance counsellors, with vice-principals of high schools, of stories that there was a very alarming trend happening in our schools, and that alarming trend has to do with what the attendance officers in schools were seeing, and that is, very good students, A students, great athletes, young people who were already renowned as being quite excellent, suddenly starting to miss a lot of school, in particular on Mondays

and Tuesdays, and sometimes Fridays. They started to look at what was happening in the school system and realized that we have an awful lot of very young people getting involved in drugs.

1540

When we started hearing these stories anecdotally, we decided that we ought to find out if this is just anecdotal, just talk, always the same story repeated and repeated. So we had a meeting in my riding a couple of weeks ago, and included in that meeting were guidance counsellors, vice-principals, the RCMP was represented, the Windsor police was represented, and we asked them some very pointed questions: Are these just stories we're hearing or is there really something going on with our youngsters? When I say "young people," I mean kids of the age of our pages, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16—very young people. I guess every generation has had its drug problems, but what is so startling to the police, to the RCMP, is the age at which these young people today are getting involved. They're talking specifically about a drug like ecstasy. There are others on the market and available in the underground, but particularly this one named ecstasy keeps coming up.

So we had this meeting, and I can tell you that the information that was presented to us was alarming. It was shocking. Guidance counsellors were telling us what they're dealing with. They're sending kids to the hospital because they're dehydrated, they're sick. Their parents aren't aware of what they're doing. The whole purpose of raising this today is that all of us are going to go home soon. Maybe we can talk to those in our ridings who have kids in that age group and start asking some real questions and find out what is happening in these kids' lives these days.

It was so alarming that we started asking more questions: How is this drug so available? How are the kids paying for it? The truth is that a drug like ecstasy is available very easily. It led us to talk about rave clubs, after-hours clubs, these things that may or may not have been there when I was that age but I certainly wasn't aware of them, to the point where that same evening, after we were all done our duties, as the local MPP I headed off to an after-hours club, a rave club in my own hometown to see what that was going to be like. You need to know where they are in order to find them, because there's no huge sign over the door. It's just a big, grey, nondescript door with no sign on it.

When we pulled up it was 1 o'clock in the morning. Not that many decades ago at that hour the bars were clearing out, but in this case the people were pouring in, specifically very young people. What I had heard from the guidance counsellors, the teachers, the vice-principal is that parents are often dropping their kids off at these places because, they say: "This place doesn't have a liquor licence, so it's safe. Kids won't be drinking and they'll be OK." They're actually taking their kids there. Of course, the bus service doesn't run at that hour of the morning, so the kids are now there with no ride. These are clubs that are open; they don't open until 11 at night

and they stay open until 7 in the morning. Those are the actual hours of the club, and it's a legitimate business. They have a business permit to be there. This club is meeting, as far as I know, all the fire code regulations from the fire marshal's office.

We went in there, a girlfriend and I, looking like mothers in search of their children, quite frankly. We did not fit into this environment. But the door opened and this smoke came billowing out of this doorway, and we went in. It was dark. As soon as you go in the door, you go downstairs and you pay. In fact, we paid 10 bucks. For \$10, I got this neon-coloured band. This allowed me entry into this place, a very legitimate business, so off we went.

We had to go downstairs, but the stairs were all black because they were painted black. There were no lights in this place. Everything was black. The walls were painted black, the floor was painted black, the ceilings were painted black, and there were no lights on. The only light that was visible in the room was from this techno music station that was playing techno music, which is all synthesized, a very fast pace etc.

Interjection.

Mrs Papatello: You're nodding your head. You probably listen to that on the way into Queen's Park. In any event, it's loud. A lot of bass. You can feel everything rumbling, you can feel your heart pounding in this place and you can't see anything. That's the point.

Smoke was filling this room because all of these kids were smoking. The only light available was these laser beams that were being shot across the room. Kids had these hand units of lasers so that as they would dance, this light would be flashing all over the room. You could see who the kids were because some of them were wearing white. Because of the neon light in there, the white was standing out.

These are not kids who are coming with no money. They have lots of money because they are all dressed in these skater-style outfits. "Skaters" is the term they use for all the baggy-pants styles. I'm not talking a 20-buck pair of jeans here; we're talking high-end, Tommy Hilfiger. It's not just any ordinary white T-shirt or strapped T-shirt on these young girls; we're talking Club Monaco. It's a lot of money to dress these kids in these clothes. These are very big cars that are dropping these kids off to this club, with the notion that it's actually a safe place to send their kids.

We could not believe what we were seeing. Everything we had heard in the morning at this meeting with the RCMP and the police was exactly there before our eyes. The place was filled. There were probably 200 kids there, and what we were told at the time was, "This is still early." We only stayed there for one hour, but in that hour, I can tell you, it just was not what I remember parties or anything to be when were that age. This is a very different era now and one that is very dangerous, and I think parents need to understand what is happening with some of their kids.

What we did see is that within the first 20 minutes of our arrival we were actually offered the drug ecstasy. We asked, "What are all these kids doing here?" The inside of the club was lined with sofas. It wasn't tables and chairs like you might think there would be in a club. There was nowhere to sit down except on sofas. Ecstasy, also known as the hug drug, the love drug, the hug drug of the '60s, whatever they're calling it these days, apparently they're all on this drug, and when we asked them about it, they all agreed, "Yes, we're all on this drug." It has a very uninhibiting reaction, so it makes people feel very free, very wonderful, and that was evident, because there were seven or eight kids thrown together on these sofas that lined the room, just on top of each other.

One young woman who looked to be about 15 years old, for the 30 minutes that I watched her, did not move. She sat with her hands in her lap, stared straight ahead, not looking at anyone in particular, didn't lift a finger, an arm, move her head at all. She was completely stoned. All we could think of was what kind of danger this young woman was going to be in.

Whatever effect this particular drug has, this place obviously knows. Apparently you dehydrate because of it. You're not aware that you're tired, that you're dancing all night and that you have to take liquids etc, so what the teachers see in the high schools in terms of them being sick is kids dehydrated. The answer was a \$3 bottle of water. You could buy juice and you could buy water at a cost of three bucks. The kids are paying the \$10 to get in, three bucks for a small bottle of water or a small bottle of juice, and that's all that's available there.

As we were leaving at 2 o'clock in the morning, the kids were still just pouring in. Some of them were driving, so they would be at least 17 years old, but most of the kids were younger than that, kids who over the Christmas holidays you're going to have around your table. I think you need to ask them questions about who their friends are, where they're going, what they're doing. There are cases in my own community where the parents are dropping the kids off and heading over to the casino, which is another 24-hour operation, assuming that their kids are fine.

The effect of an ecstasy pill is at least six hours. So we were there, and it didn't take very long for someone to ask my friend to dance, and off she went into the abyss, under the smoke. You could barely see the people. While they were talking, he was more than forthcoming that he could get us these drugs and about how much they were, \$30 or \$35 a pill. Within the next five minutes there he was offering us these pills and looking for the money.

1550

The truth is that many of these kids, because they are now on ecstasy, which is very addictive, start to sell it so they can make the money in order to buy it, and it's a vicious cycle. In our history, when heroin was the big thing, these drug dealers would just flood the market and get all these young people hooked on these drugs, so they were just creating their own market for it. That's what I

suspect has happened. It's a trend that to me has become apparent only in the last several months. According to the police and the RCMP, although it's new, it's only new in that this is now the drug that's being used, but the amounts are startling. Apparently it's a drug that was initiated somewhere in Amsterdam and is now arriving in Canada. With the target market being those young teens, I think we all have cause to worry.

I guess with my own visit there, I had to admit it was happening. It's not just something we're hearing about or some story. I have to tell you that guidance counsellors in our high schools are alarmed. The worst part about it is that they don't see that any of the parents are taking stock of how serious this situation is.

I wanted to tell you about the drug; parents should note specifically about the drug. It takes the form of pills. They're usually white pills, and it says that there are scores of different types. According to some sources, there at least six new designs that are produced every month—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I've been listening carefully to the member and I agree that it is a very serious concern, so I'm waiting for you to bring it within the terms of the bill or the motion that we're discussing this afternoon.

Mrs Pupatello: Thank you, Speaker. I will get to that.

The pills are called "Dennis the Menace," "white doves." In some cases they stamp the pills with things like Fred Flintstone, like they do with the vitamins, etc; all of these things to appeal to a very young generation, and they think it's cute. The truth is, for 30 or 35 bucks, these pills are available freely.

I know the minister is on the record in terms of the shutdown of rave clubs. According to the police, the experts who deal with this every day, that is the access point for some of these kids to access the drugs. Shutting them down is probably just going to push it somewhere else, because the truth is these kids are addicted and they're going to find the drugs somewhere.

I guess to my mind, the one thing we have to do as responsible parliamentarians is to acknowledge that there is an issue potentially in our riding. What role are we going to play in making sure that parents are informed of what this latest trend is?

They say they take ecstasy because it's got a reputation for producing a feeling of expansive well-being in the user. It creates a high that stops the user feeling tired and gives them the ability to rave all night. There are often physical changes. I guess it's because the effect is to neurotransmitters called serotonin that control hunger, fatigue, depression. So once these kids are addicted to this, the effect on them is that they don't feel what is truly happening with their bodies. There are many, many reports of young women getting into very serious trouble. Young women have been raped. Young women have died. Because it's a drug, we don't know what's in it. We don't know where it's coming from. We don't know whether serious contaminants have been placed in these pills. There is a notion, somehow, among young people

that ecstasy is safe. The truth is it's not safe. They can be laced with any kind of thing and they'll never know, and young people have died from having ingested it.

I have to tell you that as we went through looking for material, it was surprising to see exactly what's available on the market in terms of information. There are some people out there that produce books like this one, *The Complete Book of Ecstasy*. We don't know where it comes from except that it's a complete chemist-based information book on how it should be produced. If you go onto the Internet, you can find sites that are pretty clearly entitled "designer drugs": lots of information, a lot of references. In and of themselves, the components that make ecstasy are not illegal. It's the combination of when it's put together and how it's put together that makes the drug powerful and very illegal. There are lots of things once you start looking, books like *How to Make Your Own Drugs*. I mean, this is scary stuff.

I think our young people today are much more in the know. They have information widely available to them like we never did. Most kids, especially these bright young kids that the guidance counsellors are now talking about—it's not that group that you thought probably is into drugs. They're very good students. They are A students. They're athletes. They cannot believe the group that is now involved in drugs. I think all of us have to be aware of that.

I think there's a significant thing each one of us as MPPs in our own ridings can do. We've got to take stock of how we get information to parents, what organizations exist in our communities and what they should be doing? My community has a whole host of organizations that do very good work. It just hasn't been obviously able to get through to parents on what's new today in the marketplace.

I wanted to tell parents that as you sit down over the holidays and take stock of family matters, which always happens at Christmastime, look for clues. I was provided with this. You should be looking for physical changes in your kid like weight loss, red eyes, having trouble talking or walking, having difficulty sleeping, changes in mood. Your teen may be less caring and less involved at home, cranky, more difficult to get along with, moody, secretive and uncooperative, withdrawn or depressed.

You should be looking for things in your house or that have been hidden, like cigarette papers for rolling joints, roach clips for smoking pot, hash pipes, glass water pipes, syringes for injecting drugs, small scales that they might use to weigh drugs, pills, powder or any other substance that you can't identify.

Things that kids will use to cover up drug use might include eye drops to reduce redness in their eyes, mouth-wash to cover up breath odours, or incense to cover up the smell of smoking drugs like pot or hash.

You'll note changes in behaviour, which might be the most obvious. Call up the school your kid goes to and ask them: "Are there any changes in my kid's behaviour at school? Are they missing any classes that I'm not aware of? Are they there every Monday and Tuesday?"

Apparently the trend is that they're partying at these rave clubs all weekend, with parents knowing or supposedly thinking they're in a safe place, and then they crash come Monday and Tuesday and they're violently ill. So guidance counsellors and vice-principals are finding them throwing up in the bathrooms at school, passing out from fatigue, totally dehydrated, and they end up in a hospital for that 24-hour or 48-hour assessment.

Then we get into the whole issue of drug treatment program availability when it's needed, which is severely lacking right across the province; changes in behaviour like skipping class at school, getting lower grades than they used to, some significant marked change in how this kid is doing in school; needing more money—suddenly you may have money missing at home or in your own purse or your wallet, but this student now needs more money; losing his or her job; changing friends, and you don't know who your kid's friends are any more; having trouble concentrating or paying attention; spending more time in his or her room, which would be unusual, or spending much more time away from home; and a great big change in interests or hobbies. All of these things are considered clues that something very significant is happening in your son's or daughter's life.

What I'm hoping will happen in my own community at the beginning of the year is that just by talking about it today I'll hear from people in my own riding, parents potentially who are prepared to come forward and join a group that's prepared to do some work. In discussions with the RCMP, with Alex Mills, with our Windsor police, Danny Woods, with these people who work in this field every day, they say as a consensus that parent involvement is critical as a role they play in their teenagers' lives. I don't mean 17, 18, 19; I mean ratchet down that age, because these kids are young: 11, 12, 13, 14. What is so alarming is that the kids being affected are so young. The best thing we can do is ensure that parents are informed and that we take time so that parents will know exactly what to look for in order to help their children.

Speaker, thank you for your indulgence.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member for Northumberland.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to say a few words on the time allocation motion as it relates to Bill 27, the Pension Benefits Statute Law Amendment Act.

It's kind of interesting, listening to some of the criticisms we've heard over bringing forth a time allocation motion. Since we're debating that particular aspect, the time allocation, I'd like to bring a few points forward.

I keep hearing the opposition saying that the government is moving too fast; they say the government isn't giving them enough time to talk and to debate the particular time allocation motion.

1600

The kind of things that I hear around this province, particularly coming from small business—and I think we should hesitate for a moment when we mention small

business. That's where 80% of the new jobs are coming from in Ontario and special recognition should be made of what they do for us in this province. When you talk about 80% of the jobs, just in the month of November we've gone from a 6% unemployment rate down to 5.6% in Ontario, a very significant move. This is the lowest unemployment rate since June 1990. The jobless rate has been steadily coming down since we took office.

Just to add to that, the youth jobless rate has declined from 12.7% to 12.1%, the kind of figures that are just music to my ears. It's interesting to note also that since September 1995 we have created—I shouldn't say we've created—we have set the stage, so to speak, with reduction in regulations, with tax cuts, so that small business, along with other larger organizations, were able to create some 608,000 net new jobs.

If you compare the unemployment rate of Ontario with that of Canada, Canada dropped from 7.2% to 6.9% at the same time Ontario dropped from 6% to 5.6%. Certainly it's Ontario that is leading. There's absolutely no question. You can look at all kinds of headlines. I think the one that's particularly exciting came from the Liberal Toronto Star back on November 10, "Economy Booms for First Time in Decade," and the subheading, "Growth Powered by Ontario Will Outstrip United States."

I hear the opposition going on about how we're riding on the coattails of the US when in fact, how can you be riding on the coattails when you're out in front leading? Maybe, just maybe, one of the members of the opposition could explain to me how they keep talking about riding on the coattails of the American economy when we're out there as a province—as a matter of fact, we're leading all the G7 countries, the economic development countries in the world, leading the American states, leading all the provinces, going from being in last place in the economy some four and a half years ago to being first. Going from last to first certainly has to be quite an accomplishment. That's what small business is helping us do in this province. As we set the tax structures, as we get rid of some of the red tape, they're able to go ahead, creating some 80% of the jobs in this country.

What are those small businesses saying to us? They're saying government moves too slow. Yet the opposition says we move too fast. I think the people we need to listen to are the small businesses, the ones creating the jobs. We're moving too slow and we need to move on, especially when you look at the amount of debate that occurs and the days of debate that we have. Small business wants government to make decisions, get on with life. Don't talk about it, don't diddle around. Get on and move ahead.

They also want accountability, whether it's in the environment, whether it's in education. Regardless of where it is, they're looking for accountability. I can tell you that if accountability has been brought in, it has been in the field of education, everything from setting standards to new curriculum; also setting standards for

teachers and the testing of teachers, the testing of students. It's all there for accountability.

There's no question that it's government's responsibility to lead and it's also government's responsibility to see that there is extensive consultation carried out, both before bringing in bills as well as once bills are brought in.

Last time when I spoke on a time allocation motion, on December 8, on page 1255 in Hansard, you'll find many of the points that I was comparing: the 34th government with the 35th government, with the 36th government. You'll find in there that in the first session all the Liberals spent was seven minutes on third readings, on an average. That's absolutely shameful and maybe that's why they ended up losing to the NDP. There was a lack of adequate consultation being carried out during that period, particularly when there was that unholy alliance of the NDP and Liberals together. You see it here in the House regularly when they join together in opposition to this government.

I mentioned government's responsibility when it comes to time allocation. There's also a role that the opposition has and that is to oppose, and it's unfortunate they do it so poorly. I was talking yesterday afternoon about the kind of leadership that the official opposition has, especially as it relates to the restructuring bill that's before us, Bill 25, the Fewer Municipal Politicians Act, and walked through the kind of questions that we were getting from the Leader of the Opposition. They are nothing questions. I feel sorry for the backbenchers in that party when they have that kind of lack of leadership, that kind of indecision. Unfortunately, it's just no decision. It's constantly waffling. It's flip-flopping and really going no place.

They talk about wanting to debate. They would debate and they would talk until the cows come home and still never get around to making a decision. Consequently it is important, to get on with legislation, that we do bring in time allocation motions such as this.

It's the role of the opposition to question what government is doing and to come up with alternative suggestions and directions. I'm still waiting for the first sound alternative suggestion of what we should be doing to come forward from the official opposition. We hear lots from the third party and they're sound ideas for a socialist government. I respect their direction. I don't agree with it, but if the official opposition could just come forward with some ideas.

It's important that the public out there be aware of—and I think the opposition should be too, but they understand it—what really occurs before a time allocation motion happens. All kind of consultation goes on before a bill comes before this House, particularly with this government, particularly in the 36th Parliament. We went out and consulted with various groups across this province, whether it was on car insurance—you know, look at what happened because of the extensive consultation on car insurance.

How many in the opposition are hearing complaints about car insurance today? I can tell you in the late 1980s when that bill came through on car insurance, MPPs' phones lit up over the problems with car insurance. Then the NDP was going to do something better. They didn't do exactly what they committed to and promised in their platform, and members such as the member for Welland-Thorold were extremely upset with the party at that time, because they didn't take out a government insurance program. I wouldn't agree with government running auto insurance, but that was their commitment, something that they didn't follow through on.

But coming back to consultations, car insurance was a good one. The right-to-farm legislation is another example of going out and consulting long before moving ahead with any kind of legislation—letters that ministers receive, questions and concerns that come from the opposition. Then there's first reading and then there's second reading, with extensive debate, in this case three days of debate, and here's another day of debate on this pension reform. Also, there are negotiations with the House leaders as to which bills should be coming forward and which ones shouldn't. Then, of course, on any bill there's the opportunity, negotiated by the House leaders, whether or not there should be committee hearings, where they should or should not be going. Then there's the third reading, more debate, and in this case we're talking about Bill 27, the pension reform.

Again, it's just an excellent bill coming before the House, one which I can enthusiastically support, in particular the time allocation motion. Extensive debate has been carried out, and I think it's time to put that vote, as we will be later this afternoon. I appreciate the opportunity for the 10 minutes to address this time allocation motion.

1610

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): It's unfortunate that I have to speak again on what we call a time allocation motion, which is a motion that chokes off and terminates debate in this Legislature on yet another government bill. It has become routine in this Legislature now for the Harris government, on virtually every bill of any controversy at all, to shut down the debate on that bill and not allow it to carry on to such an extent that most members who want to speak are able to do so and that all the issues can be canvassed. That unfortunately happens on most pieces of legislation these days.

I've mentioned in this House before that the Legislature is becoming increasingly irrelevant. I think that the people who should be alarmed are all the people in the province, not simply Liberals or New Democrats who are in opposition here but Conservatives as well, Conservatives of goodwill who look at the Legislature the way it operates today and compare it, for instance, to 10 or 15 years ago.

I remember that I was talking the other day with a former Conservative cabinet minister. It was a confidential conversation so I'm not going to reveal it in the House, but it was interesting that many of our notes that

we compared were the same: our observations of (a) the kind of debate we see in the assembly today, and (b) that the haste with which government moves to push its legislation through is something to behold. As I say, it was an individual for whom I have a good deal of respect from a previous Conservative administration.

I think it's most unfortunate that this is happening, but it's happened on somewhat of an incremental basis, and all the blame cannot be attributed to one party or one government. It's a trend which unfortunately, in many venues, continues to be extended because of governments, out of convenience, wanting to push their legislation through.

This is the pattern that's developing with governments. It's a concentration of power in the hands of the Premier or Prime Minister, depending on where you are in a jurisdiction. In other words, the control is in the centre. There's a book out now called *Governing from the Centre*, which deals with this particular phenomenon; it's no longer a phenomenon because it's quite common in many jurisdictions.

It almost brings one to the conclusion—and this is very difficult for those of us who have grown up in the British parliamentary system. It almost makes one look with some envy on the congressional system, where at least there's a balancing of powers. The member for Etobicoke North nods that there are some virtues to that system, where he and I would then perhaps be able to exert more influence than we can today because of the positions we might hold, as committee Chair or some other position. There is an independence. They have to win over the vote of the individual as opposed to simply declaring—the whip being the all-powerful person in each of our parties—how the party is going to vote and the others fall into line.

I see this concentration of power in the executive wing of government as being detrimental. It's not that they shouldn't have some power, they should, but it's far too much power. Second, I see governments wanting to meet—the Legislature or the House of Commons—far less frequently and for not as long a period of time. This is because governments do not like being accountable. I can tell you that because I sat on the government side. I can't think of a cabinet minister who wanted the House in session because, of course, it's a very trying time. It's a time when you are held accountable in a very public sense in a very wonderful institution we have here called question period. That's something the congressional system does not have, and governments do not want to face that.

What is happening now is that the Legislature is sitting far less frequently. Until we came back very late in the fall this year, the House had sat for seven or eight days before the House was dissolved for an election. It did not sit in January, did not sit in February, did not sit in March; I think it might have sat right near the end of April and the first part of May; then we went into an election campaign. Instead of the government bringing the House back, as one might expect with a re-elected

government as opposed to a brand new government, the government decided not to come back till very late October, and then on a Thursday afternoon because the wise people who advise them—I used to call them the whiz kids with some enthusiasm previously—said, “If you have the speech from the throne on Thursday, we can spin it all weekend as our story.” So the House is back even later than it might normally be.

Then the government brought in legislation, much of which is controversial, near the end of the session. When Ernie Eves, my friend from Parry Sound, was the House leader for one of the opposition parties, the Conservative Party, he insisted on a rule, and I thought it was a good rule, which said that no government should be able to bring in legislation in the last two weeks and have that legislation processed. They could introduce a bill, but they could not proceed through the various stages of that bill in the last two weeks. I think that was a good measure. It was wiped out by Mike Harris's dictation of brand new procedural rules for this House a couple of years ago.

There was a previous effort at this by the New Democratic Party in June 1993, when much of the power was reduced for the opposition. The ability to what we call filibuster or hold the government to account or slow the government down was severely restricted. I have some good quotes, which I don't have with me today, from my friend Norm Sterling, now the government House leader, and Mr Eves, the Treasurer and Deputy Premier of this province, who both made a compelling case in opposition—I think sincerely—for the ability of opposition parties to hold up government business when they felt it was important to do so.

Some bills are pretty non-controversial and tend to go through this House quickly, in an afternoon, perhaps even on a nod when it's a very non-controversial bill. Other bills require more debate. While we're not discussing it now, I think of the restructuring bill that is before the House. I can foresee the government bringing in time allocation. I can see that a very important bill, which will have ramifications across the province. Those of us who have a vested interest in it, and I think that's all members, the most we will have by the time we get to a certain stage of the bill is 10 minutes to canvass a number of very important issues within that bill.

What we've seen is an erosion of the power of this House. We are the only people who are accountable out there. We are the elected people, the representatives. We go back to our ridings and the people speak to us on a face-to-face basis. They don't hesitate to come up to any one of us and tell us what they think about what's going on, or to write us a letter or make a telephone call. It's really hard to get back to everybody you'd like to get back to, but you have heard or read what they have to say. Unfortunately, the people in the Premier's office who advise the Premier, or the advisers to ministers or the civil servants, don't have that same accountability. There may be some good people there—I think there are—but they don't have the same accountability that we

have. At the conclusion of a term or whenever an election is called, all of our jobs are on the line. That's not necessarily so with others who are in various unelected positions in government.

We see the government moving more and more towards fewer days of sittings and less accountability. One of the tricks they use—I know the whiz kids thought this was very cute—is to say, “We'll have afternoon and evening sessions.” I'm not opposed to that, I don't think it's necessarily a bad thing to have an afternoon and an evening session, but they count it as two separate days for the sake of debate. That tends to militate in favour of the government implementing its closure motions closing off debate much earlier.

I understand, though I would like to challenge this with the Speaker—I don't know how successful I'd be; probably not successful—that as a result of the changes, the Speaker has virtually no power now. Mr Speaker, I would like in this debate, for instance, to be able to appeal to your sense of fairness, to your sense of how the debate has drawn out in the House, whether you think it's too long, whether you think it's short or not. I'd like to see that, because you are an individually elected member who knows something about fairness. I can't appeal to you now. I understand that under the new rules the government brought in, the time allocation motion, the closure motion, is strictly in the hands of the minister who wants it, through the government whip or the government House leader—simply lay down the law. I can't go and say, “The member for Perth-Middlesex, who I know is an individually elected person, may feel that because of the ramifications of a piece of legislation, there should perhaps be a couple of days more debate.” It's my understanding that you don't have that in your hands any more. You simply have to comply with the new rules, which say that the minister dictates how much debate there should be. That's not good for democracy, and that's where governments themselves fall down.

1620

Bill 26 was a prime example of that, of how the government tried to bring in legislation right at the end of a session when this government was first elected. Bill 26 was the bully bill, as we called it, that mammoth bill that changed some 47 pieces of legislation, altered and threw some of them out and changed some of them, a very important piece of legislation. Frankly, some of the provisions of Bill 26 have been extended. I think the Minister of Agriculture has a copy of that bill. They gave tremendous powers to the inner circle of the cabinet.

It is said now, I think with some justification, that even within the cabinet there are a lot of people who don't have power. Essentially it's a core of people, the inner cabinet, if you will, that really dictates what goes on, so you can't even blame individual cabinet ministers when something happens that may be detrimental to the province.

What is happening, which is very frightening and to a large extent frustrating—I see the member for Dufferin-Peel in the House now. He has been here since 1990 and

would understand these issues well, having been a person who was interested in the Speakership of the House and who knows the rules well. He utilized them to great effect as a member of the opposition. I thought he was an effective opposition person. But the rules were there to be able to slow government down, to make government pause. Now there is virtually no such thing as an amendment to legislation unless the government brings it in. Even then the government will not go into committee of the whole for fear that somehow they might be in for a prolonged period of time, although they've changed the rules so that what happened in the federal House of Commons with the Reform Party and several amendments being proposed there can no longer happen here.

In committee there is virtually no opportunity to move amendments. The government doesn't want to go to committee and it doesn't want to have public hearings. And that's what is good for the democratic process: If at the end of the day the government prevails, as they probably will with a majority, I think what people would like to know is that they've had their day in court, that they've had an opportunity to put forward to the minister of whatever it happens to be—in this case, the Minister of Mines and Northern Development is here today. If it were a piece of legislation that affected his portfolio, they would like to know that at least they had a chance to go out and have hearings and say, “This is what we think.” The minister and the government may not accept that, or they may say: “Look, you've got a good suggestion. Why don't we try that?” That's lost now. You just don't see that happening any more.

There is this fear that somehow if you accept something from somebody who is opposed to the government or outside of the government circle, somehow you're admitting that you're wrong. Listen, there is a lot of virtue to all of us admitting it when we believe we have been wrong in a particular instance. I can't say that with everything I've said in this House, upon reflection 10 years or 10 days later, I might not have a different opinion, having heard other members in the House or having heard from the public a different point of view. That's the virtue of it and what we're losing here is our democracy with that. I would like to hear from the people of Peterborough or the people of Scarborough or the people of Etobicoke about pieces of legislation. I may not agree with some of the members, but I think it's important that we have that.

As a committee Chair, I was reminded the other day, as were all committee Chairs, that we are to be neutral and non-partisan in terms of our job with that committee. We can comment in other committees but not in that committee. I think what we share in a committee, secretly perhaps in some cases, is the fact that, wouldn't it be nice to be able to have a committee work together? Wouldn't it be nice to be able to check our partisan hats at the door and come forward with something we believe to be of virtue for the government to proceed with? I think that's how committees could work well.

I'm not saying it was perfect in years gone by, but at one time, particularly under minority government, we saw a lot of good work done by committees. There are two reasons. First, the government must be responsive to the opposition, but second and equally important, the opposition must be responsible on that occasion because the opposition is sharing, if you will, partly in the governing of the province. There's a lot of sober second thought with opposition members and a lot more responsiveness with government members in a minority situation.

I remember, when the Family Law Reform Act was coming in in 1977, sitting down with Roy McMurtry, who was the Attorney General at that time—I was a member of the committee, along with some others—and listening with interest to the proposals he was making. Mr McMurtry was listening to what the opposition had to say and what outsiders had to say. Sometimes his views prevailed, sometimes he pointed out why it would be difficult to implement what the opposition wanted, but at least there was a feeling out there that (a) there was some power for individual members who are elected, and (b) the government might well modify its view if it felt the opposition had something constructive to say.

The member for Dundas and Flamboro and Ancaster and other places like that, who has a new name now—Wentworth-Burlington—has a view to express on the issue of reconstructing his particular area, as many people have. We have there a case of a bill which is another development happening with government.

This isn't the only government that has done it—please don't get that impression; it isn't—but these omnibus bills really prevent us from dealing in detail with individual bills that we should be dealing with. The House should sit more often, the House should probably sit longer, we should have more time to deal with bills, and the bills should be introduced at the beginning of the session of the Legislature.

What we've seen happen is the two-for-one special that I've mentioned. You get two days of debate counted when you have an afternoon and an evening session. Speaking times are significantly reduced. Do you know what prompts these tricks that opposition people will try? It's the taking away of the opportunity for debate. When they can't debate and slow things down that way, they start doing things such as proposing amendments of all kinds or trying other tricks that would slow down or stop the legislative body in which they're involved. If you gave that time, to have a good old-fashioned filibuster once in a while, as conducted by the member for the then Welland-Thorold over the auto insurance bill, if you had that, I think you would see a lot of the other so-called tricks disappear, the bells ringing and things of that nature which are disruptive and not very democratic themselves.

There is the automatic moving to orders of the day at 4 pm, the question period dropping and the routine proceedings, the government completely ignoring the parliamentary calendar when it sees fit, ignoring and

stopping order paper questions and, as I say, getting rid of the rule that Mr Eves was responsible for, which was the rule that would not allow the government to introduce its legislation at the very end.

I'm very concerned as well, when we talk about this assembly and its diminished powers, that we have certain offices now where there is not a consensus when the person is appointed. It was said in the House today that the new Environmental Commissioner is to be a person who was a Conservative candidate in Cochrane South, a federal Conservative candidate in Nipissing and president of the Nipissing Progressive Conservative Association. He is being pushed through by the government members, that not being the opposition members' first choice for that particular individual.

If we had a true consensus in this House on officers of the House—the Ombudsman, for instance, and the Environmental Commissioner, if we really had that—and I've seen it happen before where the Premier will go to the two opposition leaders and say: “This is who I'm proposing. What do you think?” They may stop it or they may still proceed with it, but there's that kind of consultation.

There is no question about it that this person who is being proposed now will be tarnished and the office will be tarnished by the fact that it looks as though the fix was in by government members wanting to put this person in place. He may be a very nice person in terms of personality and so on, but if you don't have the consensus in the House as to who these officers should be, then you're never going to have confidence that that office is going to be completely independent, that it's going to be objective and that it's going to be effective.

I lament the fact that I'm speaking on yet another time allocation motion. I ask the government members to start to think about how the powers of this House are being eroded on almost a daily basis and how the parliamentary system is becoming irrelevant as a result.

1630

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member for Peterborough.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member for Don Valley East was in the way when you acknowledged the other member. I was here. I would hope that you would acknowledge me in the next order of speaking, if you don't mind.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. At the time I was recognizing a speaker, I didn't see the member for Trinity-Spadina. It begs to remind us of why we have rules, and the rules are that you shouldn't be standing between the Speaker and anyone else. With the indulgence of the member for Peterborough, it would be my wish to include the member for Trinity-Spadina in rotation but I need your permission to do that.

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): Mr Speaker, because of my generous nature and being such a wonderful person that I am, after listening to the last speaker I was so impressed that I thought I was in la-la

land, so maybe we will get out of that la-la period and we'll let the member speak.

The Deputy Speaker: I'd do anything to get out of la-la land, and therefore I'm recognizing the member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr Marchese: Thank you for the generosity. I don't see it often displayed by the members on the other side, but to be frank and fair, when someone is as generous as the member from Peterborough was in this instance, I want to thank him for that. I want to say that I'll be sharing my time with the member for Niagara Centre, so at the appropriate moment he will be speaking as well because we both have a lot to say.

It's an opportunity to speak on this bill, but it's not an opportunity for me to speak on the time allocation part of this bill. I don't see that as an opportunity; I see that as putting a noose around me and around the debate we need to have on the bill. This government constantly has a noose around our necks, a noose on debate constantly, each and every day, in this place. Like the member for St Catharines, we see this as a breach of the democratic rules in this place, as a serious infringement on our rights as members, in terms of being able to debate bills adequately and to respond to bills in a way that gives us and the community an opportunity to be able to discuss things in a fair, equitable, timely and intelligent manner.

What worries me about this government is that it operates in a way that says, "We are omnipotent." That's the way they behave. They say, "We are omnipotent"—and to add another "omni" word—"omniscient as well." Because they are omniscient, we don't need that much debate in the House because the lucidity comes from the other side and the fountain of knowledge is on the other side, and why have a debate?

Surely, you've got two opposition parties to debate. I suppose they will argue we are almost redundant, both of us, both you Liberals and we New Democrats. I would say that they probably wish we would just disappear. It would make their lives so much easier if the opposition were simply to disappear. But because that is not the case, they have a time allocation motion as a noose around our necks, and it keeps on reappearing.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): That hurts.

Mr Marchese: Sure it hurts. It hurts each and every time you do it. What's clear to me is that you're saying, "We have the power and we are going to exercise it, whether you like it or not." It's a frightening thing. It's a frightening power.

I think of the poor municipality of the city of Toronto. I think of the fact that they're about to be restructured, downsized, undone, and the reason why they're doing it is: "Because we can. Because we have the power to do so." You know what the rationale is, Mr Curling?

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): No, I don't.

Mr Marchese: The rationale is: "We have the interests of Ontario at heart"—that part of the body or of the anatomy which they do not have, but that's what they say—"and we will defend the interests of Ontarians at all

costs in spite of the municipality that is there, elected to do a job. In spite of that we are, on behalf of all Ontarians, going to decimate them. Why? Because we can." It's a tremendous power. It's a frightening power that in my view is often abused by this government for their own political reasons.

Interjection: Shame.

Mr Marchese: I think that is a shame indeed.

In relation to this bill, we have raised a number of points that we think are important to be dealt with. You'll recall clause 8(1)(a). It looks as if it were a harmless part of an act, saying that in a multi-employer pension plan the administrator may be one of the employers. But we argue that it would strip away a significant right that has been won by workers. In court cases it has been determined that multi-employer plans must be administered by a board of trustees, with half of the board made up of representatives of employees. This will be gone with their amendment, and it's something New Democrats have fought for and advocated for, for quite some time. Why do we advocate for such a thing? Because we believe all pension plans should give employees an equal say in how the plan is managed.

We're worried because, who are the people who have lobbied for that section? It's the employers, obviously. They're the ones who have lobbied this government to get this particular section in because it benefits them, quite clearly, and shuts out the representation of employees. I understand that. I understand the reason why they're doing it and I understand that the employers by and large are a powerful lobby group, and this government is here to assist, to administer on behalf of the employers so that, in their terminology, "We can get this province moving and working again." We must assist the employers at all costs.

If we somehow don't have any employee representation, should that be a problem to anyone? I don't think so, necessarily, from the point of view of Tories, that it should be. They, in their omniscience and omnipotence, who have the interests of all Ontarians in mind—although in this particular instance they're helping employers—they, because of that obsessive power—you folks are obsessed with the abuse of that power, and that's why we're here saying to you that you abuse it and use it in whatever form you want under the guise of protecting the interests of all Ontarians.

1640

In this instance we say you're not protecting the interests of the employees. We say they need to have adequate representation, if not half of the membership of those boards being represented by employees so their interests are reflected and protected. We say the employers are not there to do the job for them. If it were the case, if the benevolence of employers was manifested in some cases and/or in many cases, we wouldn't be here fighting it. But we know that's not the case. So that particular section, we have argued, is of particular concern to us.

The other section of particular concern to us are subsections 67(5), (6) and (7) of the Pension Benefits Act.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Bear with me for a couple of moments. I haven't got much time. It's true I'm sharing this with my friend from Niagara Centre, but you have to give me some time. You put the noose around this debate. Please loosen it up for a bit. We still have a few more moments.

Section 67 affects the locked-in RSPs. We have argued that this is of particular concern, and under your explanation and definition—I'm not sure you explained it well, but we did that last week—it allows, in the language of financial hardship, for people to take their money out under certain circumstances, which in some cases I can understand. In a particular situation where somebody has a serious illness and doesn't have much time to live, that may be, in my view, something that is useful for some individuals. In that particular instance, I think it can be very useful. But you have decided that you will define "financial hardship" later on in the regulations, in the coziness of your own timelines, and we won't have a sense of how you define this, except again in your usual benevolence and omnipotence that you presumably will come up with the right terminology to help people in all circumstances. So in a limited circumstance I can see how this can benefit some people. But if you define it in such a way that a whole lot of people can opt into this particular section or this part of the act, some of us worry about what some workers will do.

Pension plans are designed to protect people as they get older so there's something for them on retirement. If some people decide that their hardship requires them to take their money out now and they find themselves without any money after using that clause and spending most of it in a short period of time, I tell you it can bring greater hardship to that individual than they think.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Now they worry about Big Brother. They're saying, "We want to give them choice, and you shouldn't have Big Brother." On the other hand, when they restructure the city of Toronto, they say, "Big Brother needs to step in," because they know better. Is that not the case, member from Etobicoke? In this case you want people to have the choice, but in the case of restructuring you're saying, "We don't think that is necessarily good, because those people at the city of Toronto and all these other places don't know what they want, and we in our benevolence, omnipotence and omniscience will determine their fate because we can, because we have the power to do so."

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: You like my use of alliteration?

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): You need another "O" word.

Mr Marchese: Another "O" word? "Oh, woe is me," is what a lot of Ontarians are saying. A lot of Ontarians

are saying, "Oh, woe is me," because what they do in so many ways is so frightful to me. Speaker, you were outside the Legislature a while ago. This government is fond of talking about waste—three million bucks for this book. When I asked questions twice in this House about this, do you know what the answer from the Minister of Culture was? "The money from this book doesn't come from the Minister of Education, so why are you attacking the Minister of Education with the use of this book?" I attack them because there's only one taxpayer. Do you know where that line comes from? From mon ami M. Harris, the Premier, who constantly, in his past and present life, says, "There's only one taxpayer." Isn't that right, David? There's only one, isn't there? Unless you can, of course, tell me that perhaps there are more than—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: It's the same taxpayer. It's the same pocket, left or right. It's the same pocket.

Three million bucks wasted. Wasted money on a book that, of course, if we had a whole lot of money to waste, it wouldn't have been such a dreadful, frightful thing. But when this government—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: I know. When this government—and I heard it from Mr Clement, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, in one of his press conferences where he says, "We work seven days a week, 24 hours a day, finding ways to save the taxpayer money." These guys don't sleep finding ways to cut waste so they can help the taxpayer, giving them relief from the overburden of the unnecessary expenditures. I offer one small example of that lapse of his sleep because, quite clearly, he wasn't awake when they dealt with this—or he was sleeping, obviously, one or the other. Sleeping awake is a state that I think confounds all of you on the other side.

I just want to make the point that it's a waste of money. You should be dealing with this issue. That is a point I want to make. We need time to debate real issues, and this is a real issue. It is.

I've been speaking to teachers and to students. Students came to demonstrate. They brought 10,000 books from Ottawa. They brought 10,000 books to symbolize the incredible waste that this government is engaged in under the guise of: "Isn't it nice? We produced a nice little booklet. Beyond the fact that Mike Harris's face is on it, we got some nice little pictures from the kiddies. There may be a nice little poem from some grade 9 student, I'm not sure, but they're getting the book anyway. What have you got against little kiddies and others putting their thoughts for the new millennium?"

Those kids are saying: "Please, you're wasting my time and money. I need a textbook that I have to share with many students. I need to use a textbook that isn't tattered. I need a new book in my school, and yet you offer me this." They are saying, "We don't want to see the Premier's face on this book because we're offended by it."

I'm offended by it. We've got real bills to debate which have already been given the boot or at least the noose in terms of the debate around the squeegee bill.

Mr Hastings: Don't go down that road.

Mr Marchese: But we have to return to it. Talk about an egregious waste of my time; that was it. You remember that debate, member from Brampton?

Mr Hastings: Etobicoke North.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: It's too big of a title. Somewhere up there in the north, in the 905 area. There were no one lives expect Tories. Good God, it's a place I wouldn't want to live in. I am blessed. I am here in Toronto. We have a lot of progressive people.

But on that squeegee bill, they wasted a whole lot of my time. They did. We were dealing with a bill where it says the squeegee kids are a threat to society. Yes, like a whole lot of senior citizens were walking on Queen and Bathurst, every day, in the morning and in the evening saying: "Oh my God! The squeegee kids are about to raid my car. The squeegee kids are coming. Save me!"

We had Harris saying: "Don't worry. Don't worry. We're coming to protect you from the 200 squeegee kids across the city of Toronto. We're going to put them away."

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): A hundred bucks a day to keep them in jail.

Mr Marchese: A hundred bucks a day to keep them in jail to protect the senior citizens from these wild—

Mr Kormos: Entrepreneurs.

Mr Marchese: No, they're not entrepreneurs. According to this government, they are the dregs of society. They drag us down.

1650

Mr Kormos: But they seem like entrepreneurs to me.

Mr Marchese: We argue, the member for Niagara Centre and I, that these people are just trying to make a living. They don't bother me, and I live in this riding. Every time they clean my window, I give them some money as a way of reflecting their work. I've never been threatened by any of them, but these Tories who come from the 905 and beyond fear them, and because they fear them, they loathe them. And because we are under threat from these squeegee kids, a threat of becoming uncivil and the morals of this society about to be corrupted, we need to put these people in jail and fix them once and for all.

Imagine, we don't have enough cops on the street and they want to spend the resources of my tax money to hire a few more police that we don't have, who are needed for real crime, to go out and put these kids away. That's why I say it's shameful. You people wasting my time to deal with something like that when we have serious matters to debate in this place, I tell you, is a crime. That's what I consider a crime. We should be debating a bill to consider this bill a crime. Then I would come here and debate it quite happily because there would be a reason, of course, to be here and do that.

But on this pension bill, we've highlighted a few issues. Reality is never, by the way, that clear and/or consistent at times. You have to shift reality and then bring it back and establish the links between one and the other. We have to do that constantly. That's why I have been forced to digress to talk about real issues, as well as the fact that you have put time allocation on this particular bill.

You'll remember there is another aspect of this bill, sections 93 and 95, which we argued was a subtle one. Again, this is where employers have lobbied intensely for it, and it relates to pension plans with members in more than one province, as many have. Currently such plans are registered in the province where they have the most members, which is usually Ontario, but each member is covered by pension laws from the province in which he or she lives.

This provision would allow for interprovincial agreements that could allow Ontario workers to be covered by a plan registered in another province and covered by that province's pension laws. The problem is that Ontario pension laws are better for workers in important ways. Under Ontario law, we've said, when a pension plan is wound up, employees have the right to grow into some provisions. For example, if a factor 80 unreduced pension is available, a worker whose plan is wound up when he or she is at factor 78 is forever out of luck if there is no grow-in provision. But in Ontario, the clock keeps running. The worker is no longer accumulating years of service but is continuing to get older, so therefore it's a big help. Two years later, he or she hits factor 80 and is eligible for unreduced early pension.

This is an example of what's good about the existing law, and the change that we are about to give effect to with this time allocation motion does away with that. There are some provisions like this which are very progressive in nature and help individuals in ways that I would think even Tories would find useful, beneficial to individuals. But I guess that's not the case with this group.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): Progressive.

Mr Marchese: Progressive, yes.

So we put on the record these concerns we have on this bill which haven't been touched on and/or debated by the members of the Conservative government. They've got time; we hope they will do that.

Briefly before I leave this topic, on the matter dealing with the MPPs Pension Act, the unlocking of the pension plans of 64 members, I just want to say that it is a new thing. The Deputy Premier, Mr Ernie Eves, today said this was an understanding we had. I've got to tell you, it was not an understanding we had.

Mr Hastings: You weren't there.

Mr Marchese: I was there, and we had regular discussions on this particular matter, and I've got to say that Mr Ernie Eves, the Deputy Premier, is meddling with the truth, is—

Interjections.

Mr Kormos: Tinkering.

Mr Marchese: Tinkering with, maybe? Tinkering with reality? Is that OK? He's tinkering with reality and creates his own reality to give effect and give truth to something that wasn't the case.

I just want the Deputy Premier to acknowledge that this is a unilateral act, a unilateral decision made by the deputy, and then he tries to suck me in, and the other opposition party, and say, "Oh, we were all in agreement with this." That simply is not the case. I put it on the record because I think it's important for Mr Eves and others to give clearer truth to the issue than I have heard so far.

That's what I want to say in relation to this particular issue, that this is something new, this is something that this government has introduced unilaterally, and I want them to take responsibility for it and not try to drag me into that debate and make me complicit with what he has done. If I have—

Hon Mr Klees: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to seek unanimous consent to allow the member to stand in his place and to say here and now that he will refuse to participate in the unlocking of this RRSP for his own benefit.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Do we have unanimous consent? I think I heard a no.

Mr Marchese: It's a wonderful intervention, and I just want that member to be able to stand up and say, "Yes, we're doing this." That's all I want him to say: "We are doing it." Claim it as yours. Don't say to me: "This is yours too." Refute it or acknowledge it. Your deputy said this is something that there was—

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: Mr Klees from somewhere in the north raised a question. I want to give him the same question. His Deputy Premier said all three parties were in agreement with this. That is not the case. That's all I want him to take responsibility for. So I shift the question to him. I ask him to answer that question, and then we can deal with other questions that he might want to raise later. But not answering and then posing another question is, in my view, a little bit tacky, and I don't want to be drawn into that.

I just want to say that, as usual, we in this place have very little time to debate anything. We have less and less time to debate bills that come before us. Democracy is irrelevant to this government because they are, I remind you, omnipotent, and because they are omnipotent I guess we need not be part of that debate.

I just want to remind the public, if you are incensed, angry, about what they are doing, let us know and let them know. I want to hear from you. If you think these guys are doing a fine job, this fine, undemocratic job of ruling us, let me know; let them know too. I need to know what you think, because I frankly don't care what the members opposite think about this, but I care about what you think. So you need to let us know. We need to know what you are thinking, and when you have decided

that you've had enough, let this government know and let me know in the process.

Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity, because I want to leave some time for my colleague from Niagara Centre.

1700

The Acting Speaker: Are we going around? OK. The member for Peterborough.

Mr Stewart: I didn't want it to be suggested that I sit down again because I was so generous to my friend and colleague across the way.

Mr Curling: Your own time.

Mr Stewart: That's right.

I am pleased to speak to this time allocation motion, and thank goodness we have it. Thank goodness we have time allocation on what we call in this House "debate." If that isn't the most exaggerated word that appears in this House sometimes, I don't know what is.

I listened to the member from St Catharines a few minutes ago—unfortunately he's not here—and I made the comment that I thought I was in la-la land. It seems to me that when people get up and say, "Everything was so wonderful in the past, everything was absolutely delightful in the past, but not now," it's interesting to note that in the past they didn't have very many jobs. Jobs were declining drastically. In the time that he was in government they had the largest increase in social services in the history of this province. We had a deficit, we had a debt, yet everything was absolutely wonderful and everything is bad now. Well, I don't believe it is. I was in business a long time and if I kept trying to make a decision for two or three or four days or three or four months, I would have been out of business. You cannot operate that way and go on and on saying the same things over and over again without any type of substance to back it up.

One of the comments I heard today was that it chokes off debate. If it was true, actual debate, then I could support it. I'm as guilty as anybody else in this House. There are days of debate in this House, especially at night, when it's like watching paint dry, for goodness' sake, and I believe the people of this province in some cases are getting shortchanged. Let me say that I am probably one of those, and there are people in the riding of Peterborough who would suggest, "Yes, Stewart talks a lot and a lot of times he talks too much, and also maybe he doesn't say a great deal," but it's no different from what happens in many cases in this particular House.

Delays cost money, and where does the money come from? It comes from the taxpayers of this great province. We have to get on with doing the job and doing it to the very best of our ability.

After what I listened to today during question and answer period, truly getting a picture of what goes on in this House, where a person was character-assassinated, the arrogance that was shown when this person's name was brought up about the possible appointment to a commission, for people to say about another human being

what was said about him in this particular House, I think is very disgusting.

I heard again one of the members opposite who said, "It's deteriorated in this House." The first couple of years that I had the privilege of being up here, I was on the Legislative Assembly committee and we wanted to try and make some changes that we believed were good changes. It was done by debate, by hearings. It was done to make sure that everybody could have their input and that the people of this great province would be well served. Do you know what happened? Nobody wanted to do it. Yet we will sit and criticize, we will talk about why everything's wrong and how it's supposedly deteriorated so badly, but those who are doing that did not want to be part of that debate of trying to make things a little better. I am extremely supportive of what we're doing.

It was interesting when the member opposite brought up this book. This is My Ontario Millennium Memento. I have a number of things—there are signatures in there—and someday I hope my grandkids and great-grandkids look back at this and look at the comments that have been made in this book by young Ontarians across this province. I support them 100% because they dream dreams. They have a vision of the future. We sit in our little world with our tunnel vision and we can't see what this country is going to be like in the future. I applaud the people in this. I have no problems with the people who didn't want these books. But why would you deface them? I had about a thousand of them come back to Peterborough. I've photocopied the comments in them. Let me tell you there was stuff in this book, closed up and thrown in my office that should go down a toilet. They were coming from certain areas of the city, and certain people. I'm ashamed that the people who didn't want them brought them back defaced. I cannot believe that.

The interesting part of it is, as I photocopied a number of these things, I said, "Something is wrong," because a great many of these people can't spell. I'd like to bring in some of the remarks I have and let you have a look at them. They can't spell. These are grade 11 and 12 students. Yet everybody says everybody is against it.

Let me read you a letter:

"Mr Chris Knoch, a secondary school teacher, has approached our office. Mr Knoch is going on a teaching exchange to Australia. He has requested that we supply him with materials unique to Ontario that he can bring with him to the schools he will be teaching at.

"Mr Knoch has requested that he be supplied with 30 copies of the My Ontario Millennium Memento book to bring with him for distribution to the libraries of the area schools. He feels that this would be an excellent opportunity for students from the other side of the globe to have a glimpse of the life of a student in Ontario."

It's signed by Mr Steve Peters, and supposedly everybody over there is against this particular book.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I think if the member were to look at that letter, he'd find it's not signed by me.

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

Mr Stewart: Again, as I have said, I am very pleased to be able to speak to this.

The other comment I'd like to make is that I hear the word "democracy" bandied around a great deal in this House. It's a nice word, but it's a word that some of us, I think a lot of us, may not know the true meaning of. We can talk about it and we sound very good. We sound like: "Oh, there's a fellow who's democratic. He knows what's going on." But we use words to make ourselves look good. What we have to do is get down and, yes, we have to debate and, yes, we have to have closure and, yes, we have to get on with getting the job done, as we have in this province. It is proven by the number of new jobs that have been created, the number of people off welfare, the deficit going down, and it will be eliminated very soon, within the year 2000.

I'm very pleased to be a part of this debate. I support closure. I support the bill because there are two areas in there. One is these is locked-in pensions. I have had people in front of me in my office in Peterborough who have locked-in pensions who have major hardships. They could lose their homes because of not being able to meet the mortgage. Others have health problems. Surely they should have some type of dignity in the last couple of years of their lives by being able to get at their pensions. So I support the bill and I support the closure. I thank you for the opportunity to speak.

1710

Mr Peters: I'm very proud to stand up today and say that I'm a member of the class of 1999 and a class of politician who does not have the remnants of one of these old gold-plated pensions.

I think it's very important that the honourable member just spoke about democracy and the importance of democracy.

Interjection: What democracy?

Mr Peters: Exactly. We're here to serve the citizens of Ontario and do what's best for the citizens of Ontario, and not to do what's best for some of our past and present colleagues. I don't mean any ill-will towards any of those individuals because I respect the time and commitment they've given in serving in this House.

But here we go again. It's a real shame that we're again dealing with a time allocation motion. We're here, ramming through legislation that is not being dealt with in a good, democratic process. We're here talking about democracy and you're here trying to cut off that debate. A democratically elected official works towards making sure that the public has the right to have input in the decision-making process. Are there public hearings on this bill? No. Is there an opportunity for the public to come forth with suggestions that could be brought forward as amendments? No.

Time allocation motions are not democratic. If anything, they're very undemocratic. They truly do stifle the opportunity for us to have good, useful debate in this House. What are we dealing with here with Bill 27?

Another one of your famous omnibus bills. That's going to be the track record and the record of this government: these pieces of legislation that have so many different facets included in them. The shame about a piece of legislation like this is that there are many good things that are put forth in this legislation, but of course as a government you go and ruin that because you have to tag in something else that takes away from the importance of the legislation. I think you're doing a real disservice to all of us as members, but worst of all you're doing a disservice to the citizens of this province. You've added in this clause dealing with MPPs' pensions, and I think it's wrong.

Earlier I heard the member for Northumberland talking about getting on, moving ahead and being accountable, about being leaders and being consultative and the lack of leadership, but those are all things you're not doing as a government, and that's a real shame.

Some things, though, as I say, are good in this legislation. It's important because there are pieces in this legislation that are going to be good and beneficial for the citizens of this province. That's got to be first and foremost in our minds all the time: what's good for the citizens of Ontario, not what's good for a select few.

I applaud the decision to amend the shortened life expectancy section as a very good move. Working towards unlocking financial hardship is a good move, but there are still problems even within that. One of the members who spoke today said that all we do is speak up and oppose, oppose, oppose, but if you gave us the opportunity to have good debate, we could bring forth some good ideas.

I'd like to talk about unlocking the financial hardship. The concern I'd like express is that it's most likely going to create a real bureaucratic nightmare. The superintendent will have to approve each case individually. How is that person going to do that? Who is going to set the rules? You know what? It's probably opening up a legal nightmare.

Most of us, on the one hand, would want very specific rules that would make it easier for us to protect the viability of pensions in general. However, being too specific could lead to allowing an arbitrator to decide what happens with somebody's pension. The amendment to section 39 is one that's interesting, but most importantly, members need to understand that it's one that has to be strong. This is one, though, that I think you're leaving very open, and people in this province vulnerable. What you're doing, I'm afraid, is leading towards lessening the employers' costs.

But the biggest problem with the bill that's in front of us is the aspect dealing with MPPs. In 1996 the Honourable Ernie Eves spoke in this House about the sweet deals that politicians had created for themselves. But do you know what? This piece of legislation has just added a new sweetheart deal for a select few in this House. You are treating MPPs differently from others in this province. The same rules should apply to every citizen across this province. What's good for past and present MPPs

should be good for every person in this province. As I said before, it is incumbent on every one of us, all 103 of us in this room, to do what's best for all citizens of this province, and not put forth and do something for a select few. We need to ensure that what we do is going to benefit everyone, and this does not benefit everyone.

There was a big deal made of the changes that took place in 1996. I know the majority of citizens in this province applauded and approved the decision to do away with those sweetheart pensions. I thought that you thought you had it all right then. But obviously you feel there is something wrong with it, and you tagged in this amendment or added a piece to this legislation to set out different classes. You are creating two classes in this province: one class, the citizens of Ontario, and the other class, about 61 politicians. I think that is very wrong.

We are here today to debate the special provisions you have included in this legislation. I think it should be incumbent on all of us to really think hard about what has been included here. Quite frankly, I believe you are betraying the citizens of this province. All of you should stand up and honour the commitment you made to the citizens of this province, that all members of this Legislature made to the citizens of this province in 1996.

In 1996, when the pension debate took place, you said you were a government that was leading by example. You were a government that talked about restoring public faith in the service of its elected members. Passing this legislation is wrong. What kind of example is being set here? How can the public have any faith in some of its elected officials? What you're doing is creating a two-tier system.

I urge all members opposite not to work towards unlocking the MPPs' pension bill. I urge you to remove that provision from this piece of legislation. It's obvious, though, from the way you're dealing with this time allocation motion, that you're not interested in doing that. You're interested in helping out a select few. I urge you to think long and hard about what you are doing. You're not doing what we are elected to do: to serve all the citizens of this province. For the most part in this legislation, you do that. But you had to go ahead and tack something onto it that creates inequality and inequity in this province. Especially to my colleagues from the class of 1999, those members who like myself are sitting in the back rows: You owe it to your constituents. How can you stand up and support this? You owe it to your constituents, but more importantly, you owe it to the citizens of Ontario to make sure that in what we do in this Legislature we treat everyone with respect and most of all that we treat all citizens of this province with equality.

1720

Mr Kormos: Here it is 5:18 pm on Wednesday and I've got 21 minutes—that's all I've got—to speak to this time allocation motion. I know folks are watching. They've got choices. I think Oprah is playing on some network right now, Judge Judy is probably on another, something is happening on the cooking channel, and I'm trusting that people who watch Jerry Springer are

watching the Legislative Assembly channel. The very type of audience that Jerry Springer appeals to is undoubtedly the same one that the Legislative Assembly channel or broadcast appeals to.

What is most troublesome here is that this deals with pretty complex legislation. I confess I've had to work a little harder with this bill than with many others to understand the implications of the bill, and have relied on advice. For instance, I'll be quite candid with you, I appreciate the counsel or the insight that Toni Skarica gave me when I asked him last week to flesh out some of the sections of this bill, because he had a far better understanding, a broader-based understanding of the implications of these, and I relied on his advice.

I understand that seniors and their organizations have commented publicly on this legislation and have expressed some interest in the relief it's going to provide for some people who find themselves, for instance, with terminal diseases. They can access that pension fund beyond what the rules currently provide, because the sad reality is that their life expectancy has been shortened because of those terminal diseases. I understand as well the interest of seniors and other retirees about the provisions that permit financial hardship to be considered.

At the same time, it seems to me there are a number of sections in this bill, including those that deal with those two issues, that warrant some broader-based public consideration and consultation that this time allocation motion is going to preclude. There's probably a whole lot of stuff here that a whole lot of people out there are interested in making comments on; a whole lot of people with a whole lot of expertise in the area of pensions, for instance, and what this could mean for any number of participants in these schemes, especially depending upon what the configuration of the various regulations and standards is that people are going to have to meet.

Let's understand that this time allocation motion doesn't just provide for the end of second reading debate—and there's been precious little debate on this bill—but also puts it directly to third reading without any possibility of committee hearings. I find that very regrettable because I am interested in what some of those people out there, some of those pension experts, some of those people from the labour movement who have been working with pensions and pension reform all of their careers, might have to say about various sections of this bill.

I am interested in sitting down and listening to what seniors and their lobby groups and organizations might have to say about the provisions in this bill that they are particularly supportive of.

I have concerns because I am told that, among other things, this bill will take away some very important pension rights that workers have fought for here in Ontario. I am told—and I would very much like to hear this elaborated on, fleshed out, if you will, during the course of committee hearings—that these include the principle of grow-in rights.

This bill speaks to the reality of more and more employers simply wrapping up their affairs here in Ontario and moving on. We saw that with the advent of free trade and increasingly so with NAFTA. There are all sorts of explanations for it, but the fact remains that the number of companies seeking windups of their pension plans, I am told, is increasing at a dramatic rate.

One source even told me that the days of the defined benefits pension plan may well be very brief. The defined benefits pension plan may not have much more relevance, because it's not the trend. I find that regrettable because for many workers the struggle for defined benefits pension plans has been a long and hard one.

These are the sorts of things that I'd like to hear about and I think other members of this Legislature ought to want to hear about during the course of committee hearings. There are people out there eager to participate in the consideration of this bill, this legislation, and this time closure motion denies them that right. It also denies us access to the insights they can provide. I think that's very unfortunate, very regrettable.

I understand there are things on this government's agenda that they want to pass before Christmas. We're sitting here on Wednesday, we're going to be sitting tomorrow, on Thursday, we may well be sitting Monday and Tuesday—I don't know how much beyond that—and then the public can, with a sigh of relief, observe their legislators returning to their communities, their ridings, and feel safe for at least three or four months because Parliament won't be sitting. There won't be the activity that's been going on here in such a compressed period of time over the last three weeks, four weeks—how long has it been now?—of time allocation after time allocation. What that means is the denial of the rights of members of this assembly to participate in debate.

I don't understand what the urgency is about this bill that it has to be dealt with before Christmas. Surely this bill could be considered in committee during the course of that Christmas-spring break and then come back for third reading with whatever amendments might be considered by the committee.

One of the things I've experienced over a decade now is that bills done in haste make waste. This bill, like so many other bills that have been rammed through this Legislature without adequate consideration, is bound to contain some serious omissions and shortcomings and errors which could well cause significant grief down the road until those errors get detected and then corrected.

I'm voting against this time allocation motion. I've never supported a time allocation motion in my almost 11 years here at Queen's Park.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: I certainly did, because I believe this forum is all about engaging in debate around the issues. I recall a day in this Legislature when the Speaker had to determine the legitimacy of a time allocation motion—do you recall, Speaker?—when it couldn't be done willy-nilly by a government, when there had to be a clear demonstration of there having been an adequate or

reasonably adequate discussion of the issue and/or the Speaker was satisfied that the opposition—inevitably the opposition—was not using tactics merely to delay the process of the legislation. I challenge the government that that hasn't been the case here.

This is not unimportant legislation. This is legislation that's going to impact on how people access those monies which are theirs, but not quite theirs, that they invested, initially with the expectation that it was going to be a defined benefit pension but has been wound up. As I say, there's every indication that there's going to be more and more of these windups of pension plans over the course of the months and years to come, so we should be very careful about this.

1730

There are some reasons for the historical rules regarding access to your wound-up pension fund that are designed, among other things, to protect seniors. Again, I'm prepared to hear the debate about it. I listened to the leadoff comments from government members. I listened carefully. I'm prepared to hear the debate about it. I want to know. So does the public out there. So do the folks in Niagara Centre and in every one of the other 102 ridings across this province. I want to know whether spouses are being adequately protected in this legislation. I want to be assured that the nature of the exemptions is such that there won't be unfettered access to funds so that people in their relatively early retirement years find themselves without any resources to earn income to support themselves as they get older and older.

Understand this: I come from a generation—I recall it well, and a lot of other people here do too, growing up in the 1950s—when people used to worry about not living long enough. Now I'm encountering seniors who worry about living too long. They are worried about whether or not their modest pensions and savings are going to carry them through into their 80s and, yes, 90s as they lose more and more of their physical abilities and so on with increasing age, as they understand, especially under this regime in the province of Ontario, that assistance to them to remain in their own homes is increasingly going to have to be financed privately by the individual senior and his or her family, as we see home care cut back dramatically and as we see increasingly inadequate levels of support for senior citizens, and as those same senior citizens see property taxes increase dramatically as a result of the downloading onto municipalities.

I've got 70- and 80-year-olds in my community who come to me having worked hard all of their lives, having paid for their homes, who, when confronted with growing property taxes as a result of the downloading and the increased privatization of those services that once we believed philosophically and fundamentally were to be available to all, that there would be universal services regardless of your income—I've got seniors in their 70s and 80s worried about the prospect of homelessness. No, they don't envision themselves living in an alleyway tucked under a tattered old sleeping bag or blanket. They

don't envision themselves as such, but some may end up there.

The bottom line is they're nonetheless worried about the fact that the homes that they built, the homes that they raised their kids and grandkids in, are going to be seized and stolen from them by a government with its downloadings and the concurrent increases in property taxes and the increased privatization of health care services, among other things. The imposition of newer and bigger user fees on what seems like almost a daily basis has made it increasingly difficult for seniors to continue to live in their own homes, homes that they built, that they paid for. They thought they owned them. They thought they owned their own homes. These people are visiting me in my constituency office and I'm seeing them at the market squares and at the supermarkets and at the shopping plazas and they are telling me that they are becoming increasingly fearful of living too long, of that hard-saved money in modest investments not being sufficient to carry them through their senior years. I find that an incredibly troubling phenomenon.

My God, we're talking about the people who built this province, who built our communities, who built neighbourhoods, who built families, who worked far harder than any generation since them has had to, who, quite frankly, worked like dogs and saved and did without, who made sacrifices. These are the kinds of folks I'm talking about in Niagara Centre, in the communities like Welland and Thorold and Pelham and St Catharines. They're the kind of folks in every other community across this province. This bill is all about them, among other things, isn't it?

Surely this bill warrants some more studied consideration than this government is prepared to allow. Why can't there be committee hearings? There are so many people out there who have a significant interest in the impact of this legislation that this cries out for public hearings. The matter doesn't have to be dealt with today. That's what this government wants. It wants the bill to pass without debate. It wants the bill to pass without committee hearings. It wants the bill to pass without third reading debate.

The purpose of debate goes beyond merely debating the bill. It gives an opportunity for members of this Legislature, be they opposition members or government members, to stand up and explain publicly where they stand with respect to a particular issue and why they stand in that position. Their constituents deserve that much. If this government wants to shut down debate before even but a handful of members have had an opportunity to speak to this bill with what could be some very dramatic implications for a whole lot of people, that's not democracy.

We pride ourselves here in this province, I suppose here in this country—again I acknowledge that compared to so many other jurisdictions, so many other regimes throughout the world, we have far more civil liberties. I agree with that, no hesitation, no quarrel with that, I understand that there are things that I do here in this

province, in this Legislature that would have me jailed or worse in a whole bunch of countries throughout the world. They would. We should be very conscious of that and we should be very grateful for that because it's incredibly important that there be an opportunity to debate and criticize.

That's an incredibly valuable right. It's a right that's the envy of most regimes and the population of most of the places in the world. Yet it's a right that is very quickly being not just eroded but washed away by a government, by a regime here in the province of Ontario, the Harris Tories, that has no regard for democracy, no regard for the rights of individual members of this assembly, no regard for the rights of voters and other residents across this province to be represented here at the Legislative Assembly. When you silence, when you gag individual members, and that's what this time allocation motion is all about, this closure motion, you deny voters and other residents their right to be represented in a Parliament. That is not a very attractive state or a very attractive set of conditions for what a group of people, a community of people, this provincial community, believes to be a democratic society. At the end of the day, it's blatantly undemocratic.

Serious issues here: The concern about the growing in and the abolition of it by this bill, which is going to become relevant to increasing numbers of workers as their jobs disappear because of what I acknowledge is a phenomenon—do I agree with it? No, but that's not the point—of capital shifting very rapidly, as well as loci, if you will; locations, venues of production being shifted dramatically, be it from Canada to the States, or from the United States to Mexico, or Canada to Mexico or to any other number of places in the world. We're seeing increasing numbers of workers lose their jobs before their eligibility for a pension clicks in. If the critics of this bill regarding the abolition of the grow-in rates are correct, it will have a serious impact on huge numbers of working women and men here in Ontario. That deserves to be the subject matter of committee hearings so expertise can be brought in, so it can be considered, so the public understands exactly what it is this assembly is voting on, so the members of this Assembly understand exactly what it is they're voting on.

1740

There is nothing in this time allocation motion about which government members should be proud. This isn't a time allocation motion that's a response to delay tactics on the part of the opposition. I acknowledge that's taken place. This isn't a time allocation motion that's motivated by a need for the government to enact certain legislation within a time frame. I acknowledge, quite frankly, that on occasion that's the case.

This is a time allocation motion that's going to cut short important debate, that's going to eliminate important access to incredible expertise out there by way of public, open committee hearings—that's democracy—merely because this government wants to wrap up a certain part of its agenda before we break for Christmas.

Well, I think that is an extremely heavy-handed and undemocratic way in which to govern a province and in which to control a Legislative Assembly

Are the jackboots really marching? Can I hear the footsteps here in the province of Ontario? I fear so.

Mr Tilson: I'd like to join the debate on this time allocation motion with respect to Bill 27, which is the Pension Benefits Statute Law Amendment Act. I've listened to almost all of the discussion this afternoon, particularly the member from Niagara Centre for whom I always have a great deal of respect. In fact, when we talk about filibusters, we all recall his famous filibuster over the Liberals' insurance bill. I can still remember turning the television on at night and I can remember turning the television on in the morning, and there was his lovely face. He went on and on. I guess one could debate whether the filibuster is a proper process of democratic government.

The member from Trinity-Spadina has commented on this as well. It's difficult stuff, to talk about this. I listened to all these items that were discussed today and I made notes of what they were saying. With the exception of the member from Niagara Centre and the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London, there was very little talked about with respect to the bill and with respect to the time allocation motion. We talked about everything under the sun.

Interjection.

Mr Tilson: Yes, and the member from Trinity-Spadina. I always enjoy his speeches. I always applaud them. They're excellent speeches. I rarely agree with what he says but I always enjoy his presentation. It's most interesting. I apologize: He did talk about the bill somewhat, although he did drift into the city of Toronto. He did drift into his favourite topic, which is the millennium book that's been presented. He did drift into the Safe Streets Act and a number of other things which really didn't have much to do with the pension bill. It didn't have anything to do with it. Maybe I was missing his point. It's possible that I was missing his point.

The member from St Catharines: I, too, always enjoy his speeches, although I didn't hear the pension bill or time allocation mentioned once; not once. He talked about Bill 26 and very genuine concerns. He did it in an intelligent fashion, about the presentation of how we should speak in this House.

Interjections.

Mr Tilson: I know. I don't want to overdo it. He talked about omnibus bills. He talked about environmental commissioners and he talked about a whole slew of things. But he didn't talk much about this pension bill or with respect to the time allocation motion.

The member from Windsor West: I didn't hear all of her speech. It was an interesting speech but it seemed to talk about drugs and raves and—

Interjection.

Mr Tilson: —wasn't it great?—parties. They're serious problems. I'm not going to deny that. But it

didn't have anything to do with this bill or the time allocation motion.

My point is, maybe it's time for the debate to come to a close, when all these members stand up. We on this side are just as guilty of it. We've talked about matters other than the pension bill and the time allocation motion. I will agree that the member from Niagara Centre and the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London were bang on topic, with the exception of those two speakers. They were the only two I could see who got on topic. Maybe the time has come to end the debate on this bill. I'm going to be supporting the resolution. There comes a time when we've had enough. Perhaps we should vote on it when no one has anything else to say.

The comment I'd like to make is that there seem to be two issues with this bill. One is with respect to the MPPs' pension transfer into RRSPs. The opposition is greatly offended about that. The other issue is with respect to individuals who for whatever reason come upon a time of hardship or they've discovered that they're not going to live long and they've got this money in this fund that they can perhaps enjoy their final time off. The superintendent will make the decisions as to whether or not they should have access to those monies.

This isn't a whole new concept. This has been done in wills. For any of you who have completed a will, the lawyer will put a clause in it, particularly with respect to children or grandchildren, and the testator says, "Well, the monies are to be held for my children or grandchildren until they reach a certain age," which could be years off. They put a clause in the will—at least most of the draft wills I've ever seen—that says if there's some unusual situation, some unusual requirement for maintenance or some unusual requirement for education that was unforeseen by the testator 15, 20 years ago, the executor or the trustee of the fund that's being kept there for those children can have access to it. It's a very general form clause and it's left in the discretion.

There are unforeseen situations. We don't plan on these hardships. Some of the members talked about how we should be careful of our pension funds, that we need money when we get older, and we do. There are all kinds of examples. I don't think anyone is objecting to that. I listened to the member from Niagara Centre. He didn't seem to object to that. He objected to some other things. I don't mean to pick on you. I'll pick on the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London. I don't think he disagreed with that either. There are situations where those monies are needed, as they were provided in a will.

The issue of contention seems to be with respect to the MPPs' pensions. We've heard the arguments from the

opposition. We've heard the position from the government. Mr Speaker, it's time to vote, because it seems that everything that can be said on this bill has been said. I don't want to prolong it any further and I, accordingly, will retire. I would like to vote.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Klees has moved government notice of motion number 24. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1750 to 1800.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Klees has moved notice of motion number 24. All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hastings, John	Runciman, Robert W.
Baird, John R.	Hodgson, Chris	Sampson, Rob
Chudleigh, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Skarica, Toni
Clark, Brad	Jackson, Cameron	Snobelen, John
Coburn, Brian	Johnson, Bert	Spina, Joseph
Cunningham, Dianne	Kells, Morley	Sterling, Norman W.
DeFaria, Carl	Klees, Frank	Stewart, R. Gary
Dunlop, Garfield	Marland, Margaret	Stockwell, Chris
Ecker, Janet	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tilson, David
Elliott, Brenda	Maves, Bart	Tsubouchi, David H.
Eves, Ernie L.	Mazzilli, Frank	Turnbull, David
Galt, Doug	Molinari, Tina R.	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Gill, Raminder	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim
Guzzo, Garry J.	Mushinski, Marilyn	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hardeman, Ernie	Newman, Dan	Wood, Bob
Harris, Michael D.	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Young, David

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

Nays

Boyer, Claudette	Duncan, Dwight	Marchese, Rosario
Bradley, James J.	Gerretsen, John	Patten, Richard
Caplan, David	Kennedy, Gerard	Peters, Steve
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter	Phillips, Gerry
Conway, Sean G.	Kwinter, Monte	Ramsay, David
Curling, Alvin	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 48; the nays are 17.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

This House stands adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1802.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-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

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Beaches-East York	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Marie (L)
Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale	Gill, Raminder (PC)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Christopherson, David (ND)
Brampton Centre / -Centre	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Leona (L)
Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC) Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre de l'Environnement, ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement	Huron-Bruce	Johns, Hon / L'hon Helen (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs, ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées et à la Condition féminine
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Broadview-Greenwood	Churley, Marilyn (ND)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Bruce-Grey	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Burlington	Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC) Minister of Tourism / ministre du Tourisme	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
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Carleton-Gloucester	Coburn, Brian (PC)	Lanark-Carleton	Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, government House leader / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Com- mercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Don Valley East / -Est	Caplan, David (L)	London West / -Ouest	Wood, Bob (PC)
Don Valley West / -Ouest	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	London-Fanshawe	Mazzilli, Frank (PC)
Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey	Tilson, David (PC)	Markham	Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC) Solicitor General / solliciteur général
Durham	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob (PC) Minister of Correctional Services / ministre des Services correctionnels
Eglinton-Lawrence	Colle, Mike (L)	Mississauga East / -Est	DeFaria, Carl (PC)
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Steve (L)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Marland, Hon / L'hon Margaret (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Children) / ministre sans portefeuille (Enfance)
Erie-Lincoln	Hudak, Hon / L'hon Tim (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines		
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L)		
Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail		
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)		
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Mississauga West / -Ouest	Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)
Nepean-Carleton	Baird, Hon / L'hon John R. (PC) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)
Niagara Centre / -Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)	Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest	Newman, Dan (PC)
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)
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Whitby-Ajax	Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Sault Ste Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	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.

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

Estimates / Budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Gerard Kennedy
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Alvin Curling
Gilles Bisson, 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
Clerk / Greffier: Tom Prins

General government / Affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Présidente: Marilyn Mushinski
Vice-Chair / Vice-Présidente: Julia Munro
Toby Barrett, Marie Bountrogianni, Ted Chudleigh,
Garfield Dunlop, Dave Levac, Rosario Marchese,
Julia Munro, Marilyn Mushinski
Clerk / Greffier: Viktor Kaczkowski

Government agencies / Organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: James J. Bradley
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Bruce Crozier
James J. Bradley, Bruce Crozier, Leona Dombrowsky,
Bert Johnson, Morley Kells, Tony Martin,
Joseph Spina, Bob Wood
Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

Justice and Social Policy / Justice et affaires sociales

Chair / Président: Joseph N. Tascona
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

Legislative Assembly / Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: R. Gary Stewart
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Brad Clark
Marilyn Churley, Brad Clark, Caroline Di Cocco,
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Jerry J. Ouellette, R. Gary Stewart, Joseph N.
Tascona, Wayne Wettlaufer
Clerk / Greffière: Donna Bryce

Public accounts / Comptes publics

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

**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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