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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

Monday 18 December 2000

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Lundi 18 décembre 2000

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 18 December 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 18 décembre 2000

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
PROTECTION ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LA PROTECTION
CONTRE LA VIOLENCE FAMILIALE

Mr Wilson, on behalf of Mr Flaherty, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 117, An Act to better protect victims of domestic violence / Projet de loi 117, Loi visant à mieux protéger les victimes de violence familiale.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs Brenda Elliott): Pursuant to the order of the House, dated December 5, 2000, I'm now required to put the question.

Mr Wilson has moved third reading of Bill 117. Is it the pleasure of the House that this motion carry?

All those in favour say "aye."

All those opposed say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. It is carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

SUPPLY ACT, 2000

LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2000

Mr Wilson, on behalf of Mr Eves, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 169, An Act to authorize the payment of certain amounts for the Public Service for the fiscal year ending on March 31, 2001 / Projet de loi 169, Loi autorisant le paiement de certaines sommes destinées à la fonction publique pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2001.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs Elliott): Mr Wilson.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): Madam Speaker, my colleague the member for Kitchener Centre, Mr Wettlaufer, would like to address this bill.

1850

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): I'm really pleased to be able to speak to Bill 169 tonight. As we're aware, this is a money bill. We're talking about the expenditures of this government. Certainly the people on this side of the House believe that these expenditures are very wise expenditures. The people on the other side of

the House, the Liberals and the NDP, are going to think that they are not so wise, but of course, they have always spoken against every money bill that this government has brought forward; it doesn't matter what that money bill was.

This afternoon, on another issue, we heard members of the opposition talking about the increases in expenditures by this government, how they had been so large. I would like to point out that we have had some considerable increases in expenditures by this government over the past five years. The total budget has increased from \$54.5 billion to some \$62 billion. Most of that increase has been in health care. We have had an increase from \$17.4 billion in 1995 under the previous government to some \$22 billion this year. That's not even taking into account what the federal government said they were going to "increase," and all that is is recouping the amounts they have cut over the last few years. They're going to increase the monies back to the province of Ontario.

We haven't seen that money yet. The people of Ontario do not realize that this government has not seen any of that projected increase from the federal government. We won't see that money until next year. We won't see it in January or February or March. We're not going to see that money until April of next year. In spite of that, however, this government has increased health care spending each year—it's been in power since 1995—such that, in this fiscal year, we are spending \$22 billion on health care.

I was in Kitchener Centre, in my riding, this past Friday, when we announced—

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): It's about time.

Mr Wettlaufer: I say to the member from Timmins-James Bay, I think I'm in my riding a whole lot more than you are. Mind you, I realize it's because I'm closer, but I'm there at least once a week, sometimes two and three times a week. The people of my riding know of my commitment to my riding.

Anyway, I was back in my riding last Friday, and at that time the Minister of Health made two announcements. She made a capital announcement in the amount of \$35 million for St Mary's hospital. She made another announcement of \$39 million at Grand River Hospital.

I want to explain the significance—

Interjection.

Mr Wettlaufer: I say to my friend the member from Peterborough that I can hear him over me.

The significance of these expenditures—these investments, if you will—in my riding is that for the past 14, 15 years, all our governments knew of the needs in health care in the riding of Kitchener Centre and the surrounding area, known as Waterloo region—the Liberal Party knew about it when they were in power and the NDP knew about it when they were in power. But they did not make those investments. We had a very serious shortage in health care in our region, particularly in my riding of Kitchener Centre.

I want to explain that by the time the cancer care centre at the Grand River Hospital in Kitchener is complete, it will be servicing 100,000 trips per year. That's people who have been going to London, to Hamilton, to Toronto and to Buffalo, not for the last five years, as the members of the opposition would want you to believe, but for the last 15 years, under the Liberal Party and under the NDP. Because those two parties shortchanged our area so badly in health care, we have had to undergo very considerable restructuring in our area. We've had investments in cardiac care, we've had investments in cancer care, we've had investments in MRI, in dialysis, and on and on. Because of the shortage of long-range planning by both of those parties, the riding of Kitchener Centre and the surrounding area were severely shortchanged, and they make like we should be able to turn it around like that. Well, it doesn't happen. They didn't plan for 10 years. How in heaven's name are you going to turn it around like that?

Doctors weren't graduating because of the freeze put on by the previous NDP government, so therefore we have a shortage of doctors. How do we reconcile that in one year or two years or three years? You don't reconcile it. You turned off the tap, I say to the members of the NDP. Doctors weren't going to medical school because they weren't going to graduate. So what happens? We have to turn the tap back on. It takes four, five, six, seven or even eight years to graduate those doctors. Are we going to turn it around like that? No. We're going to have a shortage for another few years, thanks to the misguided policies of the NDP.

The Liberals talk as if everything was rosy under the Liberal Party. It was so rosy that they thought they could get away with spending \$17 billion a year on health care. That's what they said in their red book in 1995. We've increased spending in health care, and they criticize us.

You talk about management of health care resources. There was so much that needed to be done that we had to increase health care spending dramatically. Will that need still be there a year, two years, five years from now? Yes, it will. Would it have been so severe had they managed health care—health care funding, health care resources—while they were in power? Probably not. We would still have had to increase health care spending. Would it have been necessary to increase it so dramatically, so quickly? Probably not.

We set up the Health Services Restructuring Commission shortly after we came to power in 1995. The goal was to restructure the health care system to prepare and

to provide for future needs. We established a team of health care professionals. Is there something wrong with that? The NDP would probably say, "Yes, it was wrong because they weren't civil servants; they weren't unionized members of the government civil service." We thought it was more important to bring in health care professionals, people who knew the system, people who knew what was necessary, people who could assist the government in its long-range planning, assist us in preparing for future needs.

The Liberals were opposed. They wanted the situation left as it was. They had no suggestions of accountability. I guess they thought the previous system was accountable. They're wrong.

1900

In 1995 a noted doctor at St Mary's hospital in Kitchener said the health care facilities in Kitchener were equivalent to Third World standards. How nice. One of the most dynamic economic regions of the country, and our health care facilities, prior to our coming to power, were equated to those of Third World standards. That was as a result of 10 years of bad planning.

I mentioned before that we have new MRIs in our region; we have a new cancer treatment centre and a new cardiac care centre. These are being built right now, as we speak. We have new kidney dialysis equipment. We have stabilized funding for hospital operations. We have the greatest investment in our community in a quarter of a century. The health care budget of this province for the coming year: \$22.3 billion. It's the largest in the history of the province and it will work through the individual health care budget items.

I'd like to talk about some of these investments: \$1 billion invested in hospitals to accelerate capital restructuring; \$150 million for new information systems for transition to primary care networks; \$100 million over four years to expand primary care; \$110 million for improved medical supervision in home care settings and improved psychiatric services.

I'm saying these rather rapidly and I'm rolling over them—millions, we're talking here. What I've said is \$150 million, \$100 million, \$54 million, \$1 billion. Then we have \$180 million for the system management fund; shifting \$75 million to transfer doctors in academic health science centres to alternate payment plans; \$45 million at maturity for expanding telehealth; \$4 million for free tuition to medical students willing to practise in rural and northern areas; increasing the number of spaces for medical students; tripling Ontario Innovation Trust by an additional endowment of \$500 million for research infrastructure, including cancer research facilities; \$30 million for the development of a comprehensive plan to prevent stroke and treat and rehabilitate victims; \$10 million for a patients' bill of rights.

Tying hospital funding to service performance; \$235 million for the hospital sector, primarily for transitional issues as health care restructuring continues; \$21 million over three years for projects testing blood conservation and bloodless surgery techniques; \$10 million over two

years for the health integration program; a \$6-million annual increase to strengthen detection, investigation and prosecution of individuals defrauding the health care system; \$3.5 million to bridge training for foreign-trained nurses and other professionals to meet Ontario licensing standards.

One million dollars to provide treatment of tuberculosis for persons not covered by medical insurance and for equipment to double the enrolment of MRI technologists at the Michener Institute; pilots for reform of Ontario's health rehabilitation system; \$6 million in annual funding to provide education and training for level 2 neonatal units to hospital staff. Millions upon—

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): It hurts my ears.

Mr Wettlaufer: It hurts your ears. I know it does. I say to the member from—all these ridings I've never been able to get caught up on. Mario, you're the member from York West. I know it hurts your ears. You don't like to hear about all these millions being spent on health care, but this is what we're doing. It has been necessary to do so.

Mr Sergio: Wayne, you're making a disaster.

Mr Wettlaufer: I heard you say it hurts your ears.

While this government was increasing the health care budget, what were the federal Liberals doing? They cut the health care transfer payments to this province. What did the provincial Liberals do? The provincial Liberals never uttered a word to their federal cousins. They're not uttering a word now either, because they know it's true.

What do the health care professionals think of our budget? What do the health care professionals think of our direction?

Mr Clark: Tell us, Wayne.

Mr Wettlaufer: I will tell you. David MacKinnon, president of the Ontario Hospital Association, called the budget "a very significant step forward." Oh, they're laughing. The opposition party is laughing. "Apart from a million dollars in new money for hospitals, the conversion of \$400 million in one-time funding from last year into the base budget will allow hospitals to plan ahead," he said. "The additional funding and the predictability are the biggest step forward in the last three or four years." He said that in May 2000.

Dr Ron Wexler, president of the Ontario Medical Association said, "Today's provincial budget is a significant reinvestment in health care for Ontario and is a vital step in the process of beginning to fix our health care system."

Not exactly partial people. They're impartial. They're concerned about the future of the health care system. They're health care experts. So which government and which party has been truly committed to providing Ontario with the strongest health care system in the history of the province? There is no doubt it has been our government and our party.

Hospitals have been hoping to ease the ER crunch. They recognize that is a concern. In today's Toronto Sun, in an article by Jennifer Bill, Cyndy DeGuisti of the Hospital for Sick Children said that "emergency rooms

don't operate on a first-come, first-served basis. ... Patients with life-threatening conditions are seen first, she said, and it's 'frustrating for people to sit in an emergency department for a long time.'"

The Ontario Hospital Association is issuing an information kit to help people recognize when emergency care is needed. Emergency care identifiers include severe pain, tightness in the chest, broken bones or wounds requiring stitches, choking, breathing problems and high fevers in infants or young children. These are indications of why people would normally go to an emergency room. However, we all know many other instances of people using emergency rooms. Many go because they're suffering from the flu or some other virus, or maybe a bacterial infection. It could be any number of things, but in many cases people sit in emergency rooms for two, three or four hours, not because of the crisis in emergency rooms but because they are not using emergency rooms for the reason they were intended.

We also found that people who are there for three or four hours are having to wait because theirs are not what the emergency room staff consider to be emergency crises. They're not what the Ontario Hospital Association calls emergency care identifiers: they're not severe pain or tightness in the chest, they're not broken bones or wounds requiring stitches, they're not choking or breathing problems or high fevers in infants or young children.

1910

We are trying to reconcile some of the problems with the additional investments we are making. The health care providers are doing the same thing. The health care providers realize that we are doing the best we possibly can do as a government to improve the health care system in this province. The health care providers realize it was a lack of planning for a very long time that got the health care situation into a bit of a problem. They realize that our government is going to take some time to rectify those problems. They are willing to work with us, and they are quite pleased with the progress we have made; witness David MacKinnon's comments.

Much of what we have done as a government has been to improve the economy. Much of what we have done as a government has been to decrease poverty, to increase jobs, and we have been successful in that regard.

Just today I received a letter from Trade Missions International. It was dated December 8 and signed by Mark Adler, managing director. He started off the letter,

"Dear Mr Wettlaufer,

"As you know, under the leadership of Premier Harris, Ontario is now one of the most attractive and competitive jurisdictions in which to do business anywhere in the world. A direct beneficiary of these policies is the province's export sector. Currently, total exports represent 52% of the province's GDP and support more than one and a half million jobs. In the last four years, increases in net exports have been responsible for 20% of Ontario's economic growth—and more exports mean more jobs."

That is a very lovely endorsement of what our government has done to provide jobs, to provide an environment in which an economy can prosper. Whether the members of the opposition parties want to believe it or not, it does decrease poverty.

We don't have to go very far. There are figures in the news media every day, whether it be the television media, whether it be the broadcast media or whether it be the news media, the press, to indicate how this government has improved the economy to such an extent that we are the leading jurisdiction in all of the G8—the leading jurisdiction. Now, the members of the opposition are going to say, “Look at how well the American economy has been doing. All our trade is with the United States. Because the American economy is booming right along, therefore Ontario's is.” If that's the case, then why hasn't the economy of British Columbia been booming at the same rate?

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): Because they don't produce cars.

Mr Wettlaufer: Because they don't produce what the Americans want and they don't have a tax environment in which business can prosper. They also have a job problem in British Columbia, I say to the member for Windsor-Essex. They have an unemployment problem.

Mr Crozier: Essex.

Mr Wettlaufer: What is it? Oh, just the member for Essex; thank you.

They don't have full employment. We're sitting at 4.7% unemployment in Ontario. That's getting very, very close to what is considered in economic terms full employment. In Kitchener, my riding, we have 4.3% unemployment. Employers tell me every day they cannot hire enough staff. They're telling me right now that we have full employment in Kitchener Centre. If 4.3% is full employment, 4.7% in the province is pretty good.

Now compare 4.7% unemployment to the heady days when the Liberals were in power in the late 1980s. I don't know how to tell you this, member from Essex, but our employment rate is better now than in the heady days of the late 1980s in your administration. We all know that our unemployment rate here is much better than it was during the days of the NDP government.

In 1995 we won an election with tax cuts as a central plank. The law of diminishing returns indicated that we were not getting the production with all those high taxes we were paying. There was not the return from taxes that there should have been. We reduced taxes; we increased government revenues. We increased them considerably, Mr Speaker—you know that; I see you smiling—and that is a case that can be made in many nations around the world. When taxes came down, revenues increased. The people of Ontario thought that was a pretty good idea. They agreed with our policies. In 1999 we gave them commitments of additional tax cuts, and the people of Ontario continued to agree. They re-elected our government.

I want to repeat that Ontario has the fastest-growing economy among all jurisdictions in the G8. It doesn't

matter whether we're talking provincial, state or national jurisdictions; Ontario's is the fastest-growing. Members of the opposition want to keep harping about a recession. They're saying, “Oh, one is coming.” Well, they also said we wouldn't be able to meet our job targets within the first mandate. We not only met the job targets in Ontario; we exceeded them.

We call that opposition party over there the Chicken Little party because they keep saying, “The sky is falling.” The sky is not falling. We have a healthy economy. Will there be a slowdown? Undoubtedly. There will always be a slowdown after a period of rapid growth. Will there be a recession? Perhaps there will be a small recession, but Ontario, I remind you, is healthy. Growth of 2.5% is not a recession. Everybody is saying there could be growth of 2.5% in Canada next year. I remind those people who are saying that growth of 2.5% in Canada does not equate to growth of 2.5% in Ontario that all the economic experts are saying a 3.5% to 3.7% to 4.5% increase in GDP next year for Ontario. There's nothing wrong with that. That's healthy. It's just not as fast as it has been: 6% growth, 5% growth is absolutely phenomenal, and that is solely as a result of this government's policy. Two and a half per cent growth is healthy, 3% growth is healthy, and that won't cause any problems for this government.

Let's compare the situation now to the late 1980s and early 1990s. We did not have a healthy all-sector economy in the late 1980s. We had a sector that was driven largely by the construction industry. Ontario right now is strong because all sectors are strong. When the NDP came to power in the early 1990s, they exacerbated an already coming recession. They exacerbated it by increasing their deficit to \$11 billion, believing they could spend the province out of the recession. It was not to be, as we know. In fact, we had a made-in-Ontario, made-in-Canada recession that was far more serious than anything this country had seen since the 1930s.

1920

But we can manage the situation a whole lot better than that party could. We can manage the situation a whole lot better than the Liberals can. You will see at the end of the day that with over 830,000 net new jobs since we came to power in 1995—

Interjection: From Kanata to Kitchener.

Mr Wettlaufer: —from Kanata to Kitchener, and over 40% of all the net new jobs in Canada having been created in Ontario, our economy is strong indeed.

It was very interesting. I picked up today a copy of Inside Queen's Park, which is a weekly publication by G.P. Murray Research Ltd. I noted in here a section, if I may quote, on the SuperBuild report: “... so far the new corporation has invested over \$4.8 billion, with additional investments planned for next year of at least \$2.2 billion. Of the \$4.8 billion committed so far, \$3.6 billion is going to hospitals, colleges and universities. Other targets are small town and rural area improvements (mainly for drinking water quality) and sports, culture and tourism projects.”

It goes on to say, "The report notes that public investment in infrastructure has over the past 20 years 'lagged behind economic growth and demand for services.'" It is only because of the strong economy that was generated by this government's economic policies that we have had the money that can be poured into the SuperBuild fund in order to make up for the lack of investments that were made by the two previous governments.

We have a strong economy. We have confident consumers. We have confident business people. We have jobs. I suggest to you, Mr Speaker, that even the provincial Liberals could learn from the lessons in history of the past five years, but I suppose they probably will not because they continue to battle against our economic direction and our tax reductions. I remind them that even their federal cousins in Ottawa now recognize our economic policies as being the right ones and they are doing likewise. They have an economic policy which is now primarily centred on tax cuts. Even the federal Liberals have learned from the lessons of history. Maybe the provincial Liberals will do likewise, but I doubt it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Further debate?

Mr Crozier: I welcome the opportunity to spend a few minutes speaking on the supply motion this evening. I actually enjoy following the member from Kitchener Centre in debate because he always opens up so many areas you can talk about.

He's bragging about how much money this government has put into health care. I won't dispute that. He's talking about how great the economy is. I won't dispute that either. But in acknowledging what he has said, because I believe he believes what he said, it just moves me to ask a couple of questions. Why is it, if we're spending so much more in health care than we've ever spent in our history, our hospital emergency wards are clogged? He suggests it's because people don't know how to use them. I guess the member from Kitchener Centre will be able to explain to people how they use them. Perhaps we should have some kind of public information that goes out to people on how to use them, as opposed to the partisan advertising we see this government spend millions of dollars on.

They've spent so much more on health care in the past year, more than at any other time in history. Why then are those emergency rooms that are left open on bypass, on critical care bypass? I guess I'll leave that up to the member for Kitchener Centre to explain to us. Why is it, if they've spent more on health care than at any time in history, that I get more calls today with concern about our health care system than I did almost exactly seven years ago when I started in this Legislature? I guess I'll leave that up to the member to answer as well.

I hope to ask enough questions in my 10 minutes so that perhaps the member from Kitchener Centre won't have time to answer them all.

He says we're the leading jurisdiction of the G8. I'll agree with him again. I think there are a number of reasons for it. He will propose that it's tax cuts that have

done it. All right. To some extent that may be the case. But I think the policies of the federal government should get some acknowledgement. I think the fact that the North American economy has been in its longest period of expansion in history should get some credit for it.

He also raised the question that the opposition's talk is doomsdayish. I'm talking about what's out there, I'm talking about what's in the media today and, yes, I'm talking about some concern that I have for the future. The American economy is apparently cooling down more quickly than ours but, trust me, it's going to affect us somewhere along the way. All we want you to do is acknowledge that. All we want you to do is prepare for it.

I mentioned earlier today concerns I have in my constituency—and I know my colleague from Chatham-Kent Essex shares these concerns—in the area of agriculture. High energy prices are going to be devastating to the greenhouse industry in our area. They've used natural gas up to now. We understand that natural gas prices may double in the next few months. Some greenhouse growers are having to consider changing to an alternative fuel. The problem is that although it's cheaper, it's more harmful to the environment.

Today my colleague from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke went on at some length about hydro rates and how we were told that with the restructuring of Ontario Hydro and competition, we were going to have lower hydro rates. The most recent increase we've heard is 13%. We have no idea whether that's going to be the end of the increases or not.

While we can relish the boom we're in today, and I can stand here and say how well off I am today, there are many parts of this economy that don't share the benefit that we've shared.

Poverty is still with us, and I think until the time that we've beaten poverty, none of us can rest. The Minister of Community and Social Services will stand up and say he agrees with that and that's his objective, and I laud him for saying that. We just want to see him do something.

Do you know a question I get asked today? We live in the best times ever. I won't dispute that at all. I've been able to share in some of the best times ever. Some of the government members are still concerned that they're not being paid enough in the best times ever, but I think they, like I and others, will be able to get by. We're living in the very best times ever, yet we can't afford to help those in our province who need help.

1930

I think specifically of special-needs kids in school. I'm constantly called about the need for millions of dollars, just in my riding alone, to take care of the special-needs kids and their educational needs. They are assessed as having a need, and yet they are told there isn't enough funding. I kind of liken that, in our health care system, to being halfway through having an appendectomy. You've already been diagnosed as needing one, and it's an emergency. They get halfway through the appendectomy and

say, "I'm sorry, we're out of money. We know you need the operation, but we're out of money."

Before I came down here this evening, I was on the phone with a father who is working his heart out because of the need of a child of theirs for care at home. They say they are 20th on the list; in other words, they have been told the need is there and that their child qualifies, and yet they are 20th on the list. How do you tell a parent that, when we live in the very best times we've ever lived in?

Along with your rosy outlook and description that it's never been better than it's ever been, there are still these questions that haunt our constituents. I'm surprised you don't get the same questions.

I suspect the economy in Kitchener is not unlike the one in Essex county. I expect the expectations of your constituents are not unlike mine. I guess you have all the happy ones and we have those who are need. If that's the case, then you're not being fair there either. I like to think that politics don't enter into need. I like to think that a benevolent, conscientious, compassionate government treats everybody the same.

We're even told by them from time to time, "We were elected to govern all the people of all the province," and I've give you the benefit of the doubt. You weren't elected by a majority of them, but you were elected to govern all the people of all the province, and I give you the benefit of the doubt. I just ask, when you stand up and say how great things are, that just on occasion you acknowledge there are some things you're not doing that should be done.

I smiled just a little when the member got up and bragged about how much money you've spent. I suspect there are some of those Reform-Alliance, right-wing supporters of yours who just cringe when you stand up and brag about how much money you spend. In the past, we've heard terms like "spending like a drunken sailor." I suspect some of your right-wing supporters, some of those who elected you because you were going to make government smaller and decrease all their taxes—you tell us it's only the middle class—would like big hunks of tax breaks, and yet you stand up and brag that you're outspending everybody in history. Well, that's not your nature. A right-wing party, a Reform-Alliance party like the Mike Harris government, wouldn't normally stand up and brag about how much they're spending.

Anyway, my time is up. I only wish that when the member opposite stood up and bragged about how much money he spent, he could brag about how he had spent on special-needs kids and services at home, and that he had spent so much on a health care system that still results in clogged, closed emergency rooms.

Mr Bisson: Thank you for an opportunity to speak on a money or budget bill, which allows us to talk about all the issues that touch this Legislature, from finance through the various ministries that are funded through this ministry.

I want to speak of a couple of them, but before I start I want to make a comment with regard to one of the

members, Mr Wettlaufer—I forget his riding; I'm sure he'll tell me what it is.

He talked about the history of this place, and he talked about five years. I had to laugh to myself, because history is always referred to as something that expands beyond more than five years. I thought his comments on that were kind of interesting. I'm sure he's going to get up and elaborate on that at one point. I always find his comments both enlightening and wonderful.

We all know that before 1995, the world was a black place. Nothing happened. Everything was awful. It was just so terrible how life operated across this country, not only here in Ontario but across North America and the rest of the world, because Mike Harris hadn't come to power yet. Before 1995 I think all the world was cringing, wondering what was going to happen until the messiah himself walked down University Avenue and came to Queen's Park. We all know that after that, the American economy rebounded, the Ontario economy rebounded, Quebec, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, all the 52 states, Europe. It was just amazing.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the government for its wonderful agenda, because we know that without it Bill Clinton would never have been able to do all the things he did in the United States. I'm sure M. Miterrand and Mr Blair and others across the ocean in Europe, in countries like Germany, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, France, Italy and Greece, all want to send homage to the government across the way, especially to Mr Wettlaufer, because we all know that before 1995, nothing good happened in the world. It was just an awful place to live.

I feel so much better now that Mr Harris was elected in 1995, because before that I know there was nothing good to be said in the world. There were just the lost centuries and the lost millenniums before. Between the pyramids being built in Giza in about 1500 BC and 1995, nothing happened, and we understand that. I feel so lucky to be in this Legislature with luminaries such as Mr Wettlaufer. It just warms the cockles of my heart.

I wanted to start off by saying that, because we all know the world began in 1995 and nothing existed before. It was just like—I'm just moved.

Enough on that. I think I've made my point.

Mr Rob Sampson (Mississauga Centre): Who said that?

Mr Bisson: Good day, Rob. How's it going? Nice to see you here.

Mr Wettlaufer: What point did you make? I don't think anybody understands it.

Mr Bisson: Never mind. I won't even comment.

A couple of things I want to address here. The first one—not in any particular order—is what's happening in Ontario, and specifically what's happening in north-eastern Ontario, when it comes to transportation. About 80 years ago, the government started Ontario Northland. Eventually it became the ONTC. Actually, before that it was called the T&NO railway. The government of the day, in this very Legislature 80-some-odd years ago,

understood that by creating a railway, part of a transportation infrastructure, we would be able to develop much of what is now northern Ontario. We pushed a spur northward from North Bay, eventually to be hooked up to the CN all the way up to Hearst and Moosonee and all the way across to the rest of western Ontario.

The governments of those days, and governments since, understood they had a responsibility when it came to both the economy and the people of that region to provide a sound transportation infrastructure to make sure that not only were people able to move within that area of the province, called northeastern Ontario, but also that the economy is able to operate as well. Every government until this time—well, nobody did anything before 1995, but I'll just pretend that never happened—has understood that it had a responsibility when it came to northern Ontario. There was somewhat of an understanding by all governments before—be it Conservative, Liberal, a Liberal-NDP accord or an NDP government—that there was a responsibility to make sure services were provided to the people of northeastern Ontario by way of the Ontario Northland.

Yes, that meant subsidies were paid by the province of Ontario to the ONTC, because all governments before understood that the geography in northern Ontario is vast, the population is fairly sparse, but nonetheless there needs to be a transportation infrastructure to move goods and people across northeastern Ontario. At one time, we moved a lot of people on that railway, but over the years we're moving fewer people—I believe somewhere around 32,000 people used the Northlander last year. But also, the idea of shipping freight for companies like Kidd Creek mines, Abitibi-Price, Levesque Plywood, you name it: a whole bunch of companies up north utilize the railway as a way to move their goods to market.

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Governments in the past understood they had to pay a subsidy to the ONTC because the market was not such to recapture the amount of money it actually cost to run that enterprise. In much the same way the Conservative government today understands it needs to maintain a highway infrastructure in southern Ontario to allow our industry to operate, governments in the past understood you had to operate a railway and the other companies it owned in order to allow the northern Ontario economy to prosper.

What's happened recently is that since 1996 the Harris government has undertaken an approach that says, "We are going to slowly kill the ONTC, and then we're going to build the argument that we have to get rid of the Northlander and let's see what else." Immediately after getting elected in 1995, the government moved, in 1996, to close down norOntair, the air arm of the ONTC. Governments in the past—in fact it was Bill Davis's Conservative government that created norOntair—understood there were fairly good links when it came to north-south air service, but when it came to the east-west connections between northern communities, there was very poor service and often aircraft that people did not

feel comfortable riding in, not that they weren't safe, but because of the loads they had to run fairly small aircraft to make it economical. Customers didn't like that, and they didn't use it. Eventually, people in the Conservative government under Bill Davis understood we needed to create an air wing of the ONTC, called norOntair, to create those east-west links across the northern Ontario economy.

In 1996 the government decided they were going to get rid of norOntair. They told us at the time—Harris got up in the House, along with Mr Hodgson, who was the Minister of Northern Development and Mines at the time—"Don't worry, be happy. Everything's going to be wonderful. The moment we close down norOntair, everything is going to be all right. The private sector will go running to the economy of northern Ontario and they'll be falling over each other to provide services to communities like Hearst and Kapuskasing and Englehart and Timmins and Sudbury and all the way across northwestern Ontario to Dryden and a whole bunch of other communities across the way—Terrace Bay and others. Not to worry. Everything will just be fine."

We said at the time, "You can't do that. The reason norOntair was put in place was because the private sector did not service most of those communities, and where they did, the service was substandard and people didn't use it. In order to allow the economy to prosper, we have to have those east-west links to northern Ontario that allow travellers and, more importantly, business people to travel from one end of northern Ontario to the other in order to do business in that part of the province."

The government said, "Don't worry. Everything will be fine. We don't believe that putting public dollars in this crown corporation to run norOntair is good business for the province of Ontario to be in." With its ideological belief that government should not be involved in that type of business, they closed it down. As a result, communities en masse across northern Ontario lost air services. The government's response was, "Giving a subsidy to a public corporation is a bad thing. Instead, we're going to give a subsidy to the municipalities to pay a private air carrier to provide services in their community." So public subsidy, bad; private subsidy, good—a me Tarzan, you Jane kind of attitude, because that's about as smart as Mike Harris can think sometimes, decided that was the way it had to be.

Unfortunately, that has not resolved the problem. Because of a whole bunch of reasons, a number of communities across northern Ontario have no east-west air service whatsoever and don't have any north-south service either, even after that subsidy being offered to communities. Take a look along Highway 11. The communities of Englehart, Kirkland Lake, Cochrane, almost Kapuskasing—they managed to negotiate a deal with Bearskin now that the Air Quebec deal has fallen through—and Hearst have lost air services all together. The business community in those areas has no mechanism to travel for business outside those communities.

The members of the government stand here and say, "What the heck. They're only small communities. It can't be that big a deal. How many people live in Kirkland Lake? 10,000? It can't be all that serious. Englehart—another 4,000 or 5,000 people. Who cares?" Well, if you're the businesses and you're the owners and the operators of those businesses up in those communities, you do care, because it means you're not able to travel quickly to take advantage of what's happening in the market, to do what you've got to do to allow your business to grow and prosper.

I see it. I'm a pilot. I have my own aircraft. That's how I travel in northeastern Ontario. You can't do it otherwise, unless you want to put your snowshoes on and walk through the bush, because most of the communities in my riding are without any kind of service other than air service. I see what happens. Businesses are forced to charter private companies to come and fly travellers in and out of their businesses to be able to do what needs to be done—at a very high cost, I might add.

I look at companies like Columbia Forest up in Hearst, I look at Tembec, I look at Abitibi, I look at a number of other companies, the recycling companies out of Kirkland Lake. The only way they're able to do any kind of air travel is to charter, at an extreme cost, travellers in and out of their businesses. That adds to the overall cost of doing business and it hurts their viability as a corporation and, I would argue, hurts the economy of northeastern Ontario as well.

But the government said, "Don't worry. We will privatize. We will get rid of norOntair. We don't need to be throwing a public subsidy after this thing. Everything is going to be fine after." We find out after the words, maybe about a year down the road, that all of those communities are without service. There's a whole range of communities that have either no service at all or have had air service in east-west connections go, quite frankly, from a fairly reasonable schedule that was affordable to a fairly expensive and not-as-frequent service as we used to have at norOntair.

So you say, "What does that mean?" It means that's one part of our transportation infrastructure that went down the tubes since you guys have taken power. As a result, the northern Ontario economy has suffered. You like to quote numbers? Take a look at the northern Ontario economic numbers. The numbers indicate that northern Ontario has not benefited to the degree of southern Ontario from what has happened in the North American economy. Yes, southern Ontario has prospered. There have been a lot of good business opportunities in southern Ontario as a result of what's happened overall within the economy and they've been able to plug into that. But for northern businesses and northern entrepreneurs it's been fairly difficult, and one of the reasons, I wouldn't argue at all, is the issue of air travel.

Now the government, since 1996, says, "Our next plan now is to get rid of the Northlander," because it's been a thorn in the side of people like Mike Harris for a long

time that any kind of public dollars are going into a company called ONTC, the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission, that's based out of North Bay, the Premier's own riding. What they've done is reduce service on the trains from having two trains a day, where you're able to get on the train at one time, at a fairly reasonable time in the morning, travel to Toronto, get off, do your business and go back on the 11 o'clock train to northern Ontario.

The government said, "Oh, we're wise. We're going to save the commission money. We're going to drop it down to one train." So now if you want to take the train out of Timmins, you have to get on a bus to go to Matheson. You get on the train, I believe it is about 5:30 or 6 in the morning, you travel by train into Toronto, and if you want to get back, you're brought back that night all right but you're dropped off in the early morning in the middle of northern Ontario. In the winter that ain't exactly a very inviting thing to do. As a result of reducing the train service, many people stopped taking the train. Surprise, surprise.

Imagine, if you will, if you were to have TTC service here in Toronto on the subway going up Yonge street and all of a sudden the TTC said, "To save money, rather than having a train every two or three minutes during rush hour, we're going to run one every 30 minutes." I want to know how many people would actually stand on the platforms along the Spadina and University lines and along the Yonge Street line, waiting for subway trains if the city of Toronto was to reduce services to such a point that you had to wait 30 minutes to take the subway. People will either walk, take the bus or get in a car, or carpool. It's as simple as that, and that's what this government has done with the Northlander. They reduced services to the point that people stopped using it to the degree that they did.

We now find ourselves in 1999-2000 with a ridership of just under 32,000 people, where we used to run at pretty well double that number when this government came to office. So I will argue and say, on the record, this government has set up the demise of the Northlander because they don't believe that this government should be paying a subsidy. So what they did is change the service. They made it inflexible as far as schedules for people and they made it difficult for people to utilize because of the infrequency. Surprise, surprise, people stopped taking it and now we have fewer people, therefore we have less revenue, and therefore they are more reliant on the subsidy than they were before.

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The government's response is not, "We were wrong. We need to take a look at changing train service. Maybe what we have to do is look at some of the new technologies that have been developed by other companies where, rather than having one big, long train, as we have now with the Northlander, you run some of these specialty trains that have their own engines within their own cars. They carry about 100 people. They're less expensive to operate. They run at 120 to 130 kilometres

an hour on a type of rail bed such as we have.” Rather than looking at those kinds of options for the investment that would be needed to beef up services so people can use it, this government’s response last week, by the Minister of Northern Development and Mines in North Bay, was, “We have a solution. We had some people called KPMG look at this. They know a lot about trains. They know a lot about northern Ontario, supposedly. Their answer is that we should shut it down altogether.”

So what they said was, “Let’s break the ONTC into a bunch of different parts. The Ontario Northland Transportation Commission, which is made up of the rail service division, the marine division, the bus division, the telephone division—let’s break it up into various parts, sell it off, and then basically shut down the Northlander at the end of that process.” The section that makes money, which is the long-distance part of the business, called ONTel, which makes about \$10 million to \$12 million profit a year, the government is going to privatize that.

Yes, somebody is going to buy ONTel, no doubt, because there’s money to be made. That thing is making a profit. I don’t believe for a second that nobody will buy ONTel. But the problem is, when you sell ONTel off, you sell part of what makes money at the ONTC to allow us to keep freight rates on our freight trains low enough so that industrial users are able to keep their transportation costs under control. They’re high enough, I might add, as it is. It also helps to cross-subsidize the rail service when it comes to passenger service from Cochrane to Toronto.

But this government says, “Oh no. We’re going to sell off the ONTel part, let somebody buy that altogether. We’re then going to break off the marine division to another company. Then what we’re going to be left with is the freight service and the passenger rail service.” What they’re suggesting is that they privatize north of Cochrane by way of the Polar Bear Express and the Little Bear, and then privatize the rail freight services to the same or a different company in the private sector and then shut down the Northlander altogether.

I say to the government across the way, what a recipe for disaster. There are a whole bunch of implications here that the government needs to understand. The first part, when you look at rail passenger service, obviously is the inconvenience that you’re going to be giving northerners when it comes to the ability to travel. That goes without saying. But let’s say, for example, that you’re successful in selling off the ONR section from Cochrane to Moosonee and you sell off what is now the Polar Bear Express and the Little Bear Express going up to Moosonee and a private operator takes that. What makes you think they’re going to be able to run that thing at a profit without increasing fares to the consumers?

Those people have no other choice. There are no highways going up to Moosonee. It is their highway. I say to you across the way, wake up and smell the coffee. For that community, you don’t have any other choice. If you want to ship goods to Moosonee or eventually to get

their way up to Attawapiskat and Fort Albany and various communities, you don’t have any other choice. You either throw it on Air Quebec and you pay a huge amount of money to be able to ship somebody or something up there, or you put it on the train. You’re saying, “That’s OK. We can privatize that. No big deal. We’ll sell off all the profitable parts of the corporation and we’ll privatize to some private individual or corporation the train service from basically Cochrane up to Moosonee.”

I say, the danger is—riders beware, because there’s no big rocket scientist needed to figure this thing out—at the end of the day, it’s going to be the consumer that’s going to have to pay. Those people using the Polar Bear and the Little Bear from Cochrane all the way up to Moosonee are going to have to pay more money to allow a private sector operator to run that at a sufficient amount of revenue to be able to operate it and turn a profit. You don’t have to be a big genius to figure that out.

Think about it this way. For the people of Moosonee, that’s their only road. They have no other way of getting there other than by plane. I would make this analogy: what would happen in your constituencies in southern Ontario if the government of Ontario was to say, “Oh, we’re going to shut down and plow up Highway 400 up to Barrie”?

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): No way.

Mr Bisson: The member across the way says that would be great. He says that in jest as a commuter, but the point is there’s no way you could afford to do that. Never the mind the inconvenience of people having to travel up the old Highway 11, but imagine what it would do to that booming economy of the area of Barrie and north. That is the second industrial heartland to our part of the province. The development that has been happening across Barrie and the Lake Simcoe area—and not for the past six years, Mr Wetlaufer; it’s been going on for a long enough time—is basically because of the infrastructure that’s already there. Those companies rely on Highway 400 to be able to move up to Barrie.

Now imagine, if you will, if your government—or any government for that matter—were to come forward and say, “We’re selling off Highway 400,” or “We’re going to plow it under.” You know—and I wouldn’t blame them—every member who lives north of Barrie would be running down here and saying “You can’t do this, it’s crazy.” Well, I’m telling you, it’s crazy. Don’t do it to the people of Moosonee, because at the end of the day, if they have to pay higher rates, you’re not doing them any favour. The only person you’d be doing a favour is some private entrepreneur who takes it on and may make a buck out of this thing.

I say again, people up in Moosonee don’t have the wherewithal as far as high-paying jobs to be able to pay higher ticket prices. The unemployment rates in Moosonee and Moose Factory are high enough as it is, thank you, and the jobs that are there don’t pay enough for those people to be able to pay for rail tickets that are going up.

I would have been much more comfortable if this government had come to me and said, "Listen, Gilles, what we'd like to do is talk about a self-government arrangement with the Mushkegowuk people. We believe as a government we don't want to be running a train service that is primarily for the use of the First Nations people of the James Bay." If they were to come to me as a government and said, "We want to enter into some kind of discussion with Mushkegowuk people and their forming their own corporation so they can run their own business, so their own people can benefit with the jobs, and in the end we will provide a subsidy from the province to be able to operate it," I'd say, "OK, I can understand where you're going with that. You're breaking up ONTC, which I don't like, but at the end you are protecting the people of Moosonee, Moose Factory and the James Bay area and you're doing a self-government initiative for the people of James Bay called the Mushkegowuk." I wouldn't have any problem supporting that. I say it publicly.

But for you to come here and suggest that we're going to move by way of privatization—if nobody buys it, what the hell are you going to do with it? Close it down? What are those people going to do? Jump on a plane? Basically that's the only option they've got or to come out with a skidoo in the winter, because there are no roads up there.

So I say to the government across the way, it is a really dangerous thing that you're doing when you're playing with the infrastructure of northern Ontario.

The freight aspect of the business: all along Highway 11 from North Bay all the way up to Cochrane and then the CN line that has been purchased by the ONR from Cochrane all the way up to Hearst, there are many businesses that rely on shipping freight by way of the ONR—from Hearst, Levesque Plywood which is now Columbia Forest Products; Lecours Lumber; Tembec, which is the old United sawmill, all the way down to Kapuskasing to Spruce Falls, which is now Tembec; the old Abitibi plant in Smooth Rock Falls, which is now again Tembec; the Abitibi plant in Iroquois Falls; in Timmins, Kidd Creek Mines; and others; all the way down to Highway 11, down to North Bay—rely on that rail service to move their bulk goods, natural resources, to market and to ship them for the economic benefit that they get from that.

If you privatize this company, there are no guarantees that you're going to be able to hold the race because, again, will the private corporation be able to recoup all its costs by way of owning the freight services of the ONR with the rate structures that now exist? The answer is no. So to people like Kidd Creek Mines, which is owned by Falconbridge, it's an increased shipping cost that they're going to have to incur. They can't afford it. They're already laying people off at that mine. We don't need to have more people in our community laid off because of stupid policies of your government that meet an ideological principle of privatization and the government getting out of the business of who knows what. I say to the government across the way, there are some real

dangers with what you're doing from a practical point of view.

I thought you guys ran under a term of calling yourselves a common sense government with a Common Sense Revolution; there's nothing common or sensible about what you're doing. You're not trying to strengthen the ONTC; you're not trying to restructure it in some way that makes it more efficient. What you're trying to do is just get rid of it.

There is a reason why the ONTC is there. It is there to provide the basic infrastructure of transportation that services some of the people along the Highway 11 corridor when it comes to rail passenger service, when it comes to tourism and when it comes to rail freight services. You take that away, you change it, you privatize it, and rates go up. You're going to hurt that, there's just no question.

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What's interesting, however—and this is a bit amusing, actually. Last week the minister goes to North Bay to make the announcement that he did, as I talked about earlier. Then, the Premier is in a scrum and is being asked to defend his own government and their action in trying to break apart ONTC into various factions. The Premier in the scrum, as he always does, says, "Oh well, you know, geez, it's a rather expensive thing to do. We're spending all kinds of money on public subsidies to this corporation. We've got to get rid of it." He says, "In fact, I could give everybody who takes the Northlander train an airline ticket or a limousine ride from their home to wherever they're going in Toronto and that would be cheaper than the subsidy we're giving to the ONTC to run the Northlander."

The entire subsidy to the ONTC last year, in the estimate books of 1999-2000, was just over \$4 million. That was to subsidize rail passenger service and part of the freight services as well. Do you know how much it would cost to give everybody an airline ticket who took the Northlander last year? It's over \$30 million.

So I say to the Premier, thank you, give us the cheque. We'll take the \$30 million. We're going to put it into the ONTC and we're going to build a better ONTC, if that's what you want to do. If you're willing to throw \$30 million out for people to take airline tickets from their home communities because you say it's cheaper than putting them on the train and providing rail transportation out of those communities, it's a cost of over \$30 million. I'm prepared to say let's do it, Mike. Give us the \$30 million. We'll be happy.

In fact, put airplanes in each of those communities so people can take them. Maybe that would be a debate to have. But the point that's funny about this is that the Premier goes out and he makes these flippant comments, basically making policy on the fly, because he was trying to defend himself inside that press conference. "Mr Premier, how can you be doing this?" He had to defend himself, so his answer was again a flippant comment. "Oh well, don't worry. Jeez, it's a whole bunch of money, you know. Everybody can take a limo or take a

plane to Toronto from their home community. It would be cheaper than the subsidy we give to the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission.”

The sad part is, the media all wrote it up as if it was gospel, because, after all, it did come from Mike and nothing existed in the world before 1995. We know that’s when the universe really unfolded, June 8, 1995.

I went back and did a little math just very quickly, and if you took basic tickets that Air Ontario charges from Timmins down, it would work out to over \$30 million. It’s actually more than that, but I was fairly conservative on my numbers.

The interesting part is, the Premier, at the end of the week, goes back to his riding, as we all do on the weekends, to do the work of his constituency. He goes to North Bay and it was a flurry of bad press for the government last week in northern Ontario. Even the Timmins Daily Press, which is not known to be an anti-Conservative paper—they’ve always been fair to me but they’re not known as being anti-Conservative. Most people would say they’re pretty pro-Conservative. Even they, in their editorials—I couldn’t believe it when I read the paper, I believe it was on Friday, them chastising the Conservative government over the decision to shut down the ONTC in the way that it was prescribed. Even the Timmins Daily Press was chastising the Conservative government. I said, “I’ve seen everything.” I never thought I’d see that in an editorial of the Timmins Daily Press, but there it was in black and white.

So the Premier, as most politicians do, comes back to his riding on the weekend and then the media goes to him and says, “Mr Premier, why is it that you’re closing down the ONTC? Do you realize this means 1,000 less jobs in your community? Mr Premier, do you realize what that means for the northern Ontario economy?” They started asking all the questions, some of the things that I’m raising here tonight. And the Premier, as he does, policy on the fly—because Mike doesn’t like to look bad when he’s in front of the media as far as bad policy—says, “Oh no, no. We’re not shutting anything down.”

I couldn’t believe my ears. All of a sudden we went from, Tuesday or Wednesday—it was Thursday when they made the announcement that, “We are basically carving up the corporation. We are privatizing part of it; we’re shutting down the other part,” to Friday, the Premier is saying subsidies are a bad thing and we shouldn’t be paying subsidies, in fact it would be cheaper to give airline tickets to everybody who uses the Northlander to go to Toronto, to when he goes to his riding on Saturday and then he says, “Oh, no, we’re not shutting anything down. Oh, no, you didn’t understand what we were doing. In fact, we’re not getting rid of the freight service.”

I guess all of a sudden he must have got some phone calls at his office, probably from people from Tembec and Abitibi and others who said, “Hey, Mike, hello. Wake up. Do you realize what you’re doing to northern

Ontario? Do you see what you’re doing to our corporation?” He finally woke up a little bit.

The Premier stood there and made policy on the fly again. I like this policy better than the last two policies he made just two days before, and the third day before that. All of a sudden, the Premier decided he wanted to look good to his local media and he didn’t want to get beat up too badly while he was in his home community in North Bay, so he said, “Don’t worry, we’re not going to sell the freight services. That’s sacrosanct. We’re not going to do anything with that.” That’s sort of what he said. There’s still a little bit of wiggle room there, but that’s basically what he was saying.

Then he said, “And at the end, don’t worry if we sell off the Polar Bear Express and the Little Bear. We’re going to make sure that the new private corporation ends up with a subsidy.” I thought, two days before, he was against subsidies. I guess he was against subsidies going to the public sector and in favour of subsidies going to the private sector. I don’t know. It’s kind of schizophrenic, if you ask me. The positions this Premier takes are kind of weird.

Then he said at the end—and this is the one I couldn’t believe; if it’s true, I congratulate the Premier—“We’re not shutting the Northlander down; we’re going to make it better.”

What a way to run a province, what a way to run a government and what a way to give direction to the ONTC. You start from, “We’re shutting it down,” to “No, we’re going to give everybody dollars to be able to take airplanes out of their home communities,” to “No, we’re not doing it,” in a period of three days.

People in northern Ontario are somewhat confused. The Conservatives in our community—because there are some—are standing up and saying, “See, we told you so. We told you Mike Harris is good for northern Ontario. He didn’t really mean what he said two days before to the people who are most affected by the closure of the trains, namely the passengers.” They’re saying, “Hang on a second. Do we really need to organize here? Do we need to do anything? Is he or isn’t he? I don’t know these days.” You should have heard some of the phone calls I had on the weekend from those people.

I say to the government across the way, you need to make those kinds of investments within organizations like the ONTC; otherwise, without them, our economy in northern Ontario is very hard to operate in a way that people are able to benefit. To the government across the way, I wish you would take a little bit more care when it comes to the development of policies and how they affect northern Ontario, and, I would argue, the rest of this province. I would hope that with the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission, you would do something positive.

I want to give you some examples of suggestions I’ve heard from people in northern Ontario about what we could be doing with the Northlander, because I think it’s incumbent upon me to make sure we have that part of the debate as well.

One of the things that was raised with me a number of times on a tour I did with Acting Speaker Tony Martin last spring—what we called the trans-frustration tour—is the whole issue of schedules when it comes to the Northlander. If people are going to take the train, you have to make it convenient, period—it's a very simple thing—you have to make it affordable and it has to be a pleasurable experience. Well, it's none of the above when trains are run the way they are, not because of the staff but because of the management decisions that have been made that force passengers to get on the train at ungodly hours. There is basically one train per day; one going up, one coming back late at night. Also, the facilities on the trains themselves could be made better. One of the suggestions that was made was that you increase the frequency of the trains so that you return to a couple of trains a day at the very minimum, and also upgrade the services on the train.

One of the other things we were told is that we should be looking at doing something with seat sales. People have told me on a number of occasions that the train has been full and the ONTC or ONR have gone out to the public and offered seat sales for travellers wishing to travel on the Northlander. Rather than having 100 or 60 people on the train, whatever the number may be on a particular day, the train has been full when they've done seat sales. I will argue that if you have 300 customers at \$150 round trip or you have 60 customers at \$220 round trip, you don't have to be too bright to figure out which one the ONTC is going to make more money with. So we say you have to make your fares more competitive than for people to take their own car or get on a bus, because it's a different mode of travel. Also, people are cost-conscious when it comes to the idea of being able to decide how they're going to travel.

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The other issue is that we should be looking at different kinds of trains along the ONR line. One of the suggestions—and I don't remember the name of the train, but one of the partners of Bombardier makes a self-contained train. It's basically two cars with their own engines within the assembly itself. If I remember correctly, it is able to hold about 100 passengers and it runs at approximately 130 kilometres an hour along lines such as what the ONR has. People said it wouldn't be a bad idea if we were to try to get one or two of these trains and use them for interconnections within northern Ontario. So if I'm in Hearst and I want to go to Timmins, I can do that, because the rail still leaves Hearst, the old CN line connects into the ONR line and the ONR line still gets up to Porcupine.

You could put that kind of service in place so people will say, "I can get on the train early in the morning—120 clicks an hour from Timmins, with a stop-off in Iroquois Falls, Cochrane, Smooth Rock and Kap along the way," and you can get yourself into Hearst about three hours later. That would be a service that people would be prepared to use. You can have something like that where you run one in the morning and another one

back later on at night or whatever schedule works. You can also look at putting that kind of service on the main line, from Cochrane down to North Bay, as a way of increasing ridership overall for the train and then tie that schedule into the Northlander itself—that's one of the things we were told—so that maybe the Northlander actually doesn't run the way it does now. Maybe it would be a service that runs from somewhere—North Bay or a little bit north—with a connector service of some type going on it. That was one of the suggestions made by a number of people who presented to us.

The other idea that was presented was utilizing the Northlander as a tourist destination train. This I think has a lot of potential and is something that could really assist the northern Ontario economy. Almost every community we went to—it didn't matter where we went along the line—people said, "There are a whole bunch of things we can attract people into our community for when it comes to experiencing what northern Ontario is all about, everything from cross-country skiing, to fishing in summer, snowmobiling, downhill, ecotourism. You name it; it's all there. Everything you ever want to do outdoors can be done in northern Ontario and it is probably one of the best places in North America to come to."

People suggested that we should, by way of the ONTC, get some seed dollars from the provincial government in order to hire some people within the private sector to take stock of tourist opportunities along Highway 11 and the ONR corridor, from North Bay all the way up to Moosonee, look at what is available and then put it together in various types of packages that then could be marketed by tourist agents across North American and even in Europe as packages to northern Ontario: "Come and see the north," or whatever the slogan would be.

The idea is that if I'm sitting in Toronto or in New Jersey and I want to bring my family on an ecotourism adventure in summer, there is a package I would buy that would include train transportation, accommodation in the community I might go to, passes I'd need to go into the various facilities I might be visiting, utilizing local people as guides etc, pulling all that together so we're able to attract into northern Ontario people who are willing to spend their hard-earned dollars to enjoy what we have to offer by way of tourism.

Many other countries do this. Many other jurisdictions have done it and have been quite successful. There's no reason why, with proper investment and co-operation with communities along that line, we couldn't be looking at doing something like that to not only increase ridership for the ONR train but also to bring much-needed dollars into northern Ontario that we need to be able to operate our economies.

They also suggested, by way of that particular train, that you can put a casino on it. That's something that was actually raised by my friend Mr Ramsay from the Timiskaming-Cochrane riding. He suggested, as others have done, that you could put a casino on that particular tourist train so that, let's say you and your wife want to

travel to Moose Factory-Moosonee in order to see the sights up there, there's one-day train service from Toronto all the way up that includes a casino on it, whatever facilities you would have to put on it. I think that's something we need to have a bit of debate about, but I'm prepared to hear what they have to say, because we know that people like dropping money in casinos. Don't ask me why. I've done it myself; oh yes, I agree. I've been into Rama and all those places. In fact, I can tell you a story: out of the 20 times I went in, 19 times I went out a loser. The only time I ever won it was \$5. That's my record. I stand by it.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): No wonder you oppose a salary increase so adamantly.

Mr Bisson: That's right. That's why I do.

I say to the government, those are some of the ideas we're hearing.

I'll give the government credit for one part of their announcement which was actually not a bad one: the tourism study that's going to be done in the James Bay area when it comes to Moosonee-Moose Factory. That is actually a recommendation that was made by myself, and others from the Mushkegowuk, who made that recommendation to the government. I give them full credit for going forward with that, because what we are going to attempt to do is take a look at what to do once the Polar Bear actually arrives in Moosonee. What kind of coordination of services can we offer tourists when they get into the community? Far too often what we find has happened is that people ride the Polar Bear, they get up to Moosonee-Moose Factory, and there's a lot to see and do but it's not very well coordinated. We need to put a better effort into coordinating that.

I just want to put on the record on that particular issue what is integral in that. It has to be run by the First Nations people. I say that publicly because there is a feeling within the Mushkegowuk that tourists come in and they don't want anything to do with them. What we need to do is to find ways to encourage interaction of the tourists with the Mushkegowuk people in order to make sure there is an understanding that there are some economic opportunities for them and an opportunity, quite frankly, to highlight their culture and their history and their traditions for people who come to visit James Bay.

One of the things I've been very fortunate to gain since becoming the member for Timmins-James Bay—before that, for 10 years I was the member for Cochrane South, which didn't include James Bay—is the interaction I've had with the Mushkegowuk people. I have learned much in the short time I've been the member for that particular part of the riding. The biggest things I've been impressed with are the strength and wisdom and beauty of the people, what they have as a people, what they share among themselves and what they can share with me. I think one of the problems we have with the tourism section of James Bay is that so far it's been tourism not to the benefit of the Mushkegowuk, by

and large. I think we need to work on making that a little bit better.

There are a number of things we could be doing to increase the viability of the ONR and the ONTC. I would suggest that the government move in that particular direction. It is something that would be good.

The other thing I want to raise is this whole idea of what's been happening in the economy of late. We heard this weekend and we've been reading in the papers for the last couple of weeks, or the last month or so now, that there are a number of indicators that the economy is actually starting to slow down to a certain degree. I hope that's not the case, as you do. I certainly hope we don't go through what we went through from 1989 to 1993. That recession hurt people. It was devastating to families, and I really hope we don't end up going there again. But there is an indication in the economy that basically things are starting to slow down somewhat.

We've seen new car sales drop from 18 million units last year to somewhere below 16 million units. That's two million units less than the year before. We're also seeing indicators, when it comes to the natural resource sector, namely forestry, that the orders for forestry products are not as strong as we've seen in probably the past 10 years, because things really started picking up about 1993-94. That is very scary, Speaker, because you know, as a member of this assembly for as long as I've been here—I believe you were elected the same year I was—just how devastating a downturn in the economy can be.

I would argue that we need to be thinking now, before it's too late, to make the kinds of decisions we've got to make in order to try not to let the economy slip. Certainly Ontario is not going to be able to stop an overall slide of the North American economy. That we know. We've lived that a number of times. But there are some things we can be doing to situate the Ontario economy to try to isolate it to a certain extent from the rest of what might be happening.

We've been very fortunate that the Ontario economy has been connected to the United States by way of trade. We're able to benefit every time they are doing well in their particular economy. What has happened is that as car sales have been strong, the Ontario economy has done well. One of the things I have always felt and that I've always argued for is that we as a province, not in bad times but in good times, should be looking at ways to diversify the Ontario economy. I think there are some real opportunities to do that in various numbers of sectors. There are things that we could be doing. For example, I would argue, as a New Democrat, if we're looking at tax breaks by way of tax cuts, we should be looking at using those a bit more surgically rather than giving people a tax cut overall.

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Mr Speaker, you and I received a tax cut. You see the difference on your paycheque, as I do. We make over \$80,000 a year and there is probably a difference of around \$300 a month on our particular paycheques. As

that person who gets the benefit of the \$300, I'm not so sure it does a heck of a lot of good for the Ontario economy. All I did is up the amount of money I put into my savings—it's not money that I'm actually spending—and that's what most of us with money end up doing. We end up buying more property or we end up investing it in the market or putting it in bonds in order to save for that day we wish to retire.

There is some slight benefit to reducing taxes overall. I won't argue there is none. But we would be better off saying, "Let's take a look at how we can deal with taxes in a more progressive way when it comes to the economy." One of the ways we could be doing that is by saying, "Let's have an accelerated write-off on new investment." If, for example, a company comes to Ontario to invest \$10 million or \$100 million on a new project of some type, where they're building, we should look at being able to increase their tax benefits by way of that investment in our communities. For example, we're building a new call centre in the city of Timmins. If you're able to give those who are investing dollars—and making sure you've got some assurances coming back—some sort of tax benefit, there may be some arguments why they may come and invest within our communities. That's one of the ways we can look at that.

The other way is to do it on R&D. Ontario is one of the best places in Canada, if not North America, to do business. We have a lot of very well trained individuals in this province because of our public community college and university system. As a result, we have a lot of good talent in our communities who are perfectly capable and willing to do R&D work and develop the new products and new technologies that feed our industry. I would like to see the province of Ontario—I would even argue, in co-operation with the federal government—doing some investing by way of giving tax credits to those who actually invest in research and development.

That would be a smart way of using our tax dollars, so that we're able to stimulate those activities in the economy. We can go even one step further and say, "We will do that only in certain industries." Maybe we don't do it across the board for anybody who wants to invest, for example, somebody who says, "I just want to invest in a call centre," or whatever. The Ontario government could say, "We want to enhance activities in the economy when it comes to certain sectors, and we will try it on those particular sectors to see how it goes."

If you have somebody out there who is doing R&D work, research and development, and they have an opportunity of doing it in Ontario and recapturing by way of tax credits some of the money they have to spend, it might be a reason for them to invest here. Once they've done the research and development, there are good chances that the spinoff from that research and development will pay dividends down the road. So what is basically a tax credit today is money that we're using by way of tax cuts directly today, but as they do the development, maybe five or 10 years down the road they develop some new product to which Ontario can be a net

benefactor. If you take a look at what some of the economies of Europe and what Japan did after the Second World War, it's exactly that. They basically looked at doing R&D work.

I would also argue that one of the things we need to do is give the caisses populaires and the credit unions a little bit more leeway when it comes to lending money to individuals who want to take the risk of starting their own business. One of the things I think we've all seen—I'm sure the member from Kingston and Madam Boyer from Vanier have this seen in their offices—somebody comes in who has a good idea, and they're willing to take the risk with their own money, but when they go to the bank they're not able to get fully capitalized. As a result, they're not able to go forward with their business. Unfortunately, sometimes they do it anyway, and because they are undercapitalized they're always running from behind the eight ball. What should be properly a \$150,000 or \$200,000 investment they try to do with 75% or 50% of that. They actually get their doors open, but because they are so cash-strapped, they're never able to really operate the way they need to and, in effect, they end up failing.

Part of the problem is that I believe the banks have become much too restrictive, too conservative in their lending. They're not as free as they used to be. As a result, the people with money are the ones who are able to get the most of it. If I'm a big corporation, it's much easier for me to be loaned millions of dollars than it is for the individual looking at the \$100,000 to \$2-million range.

One of the things we could be looking at is how this Legislature can create a program that gives the caisses populaires and the credit unions some ability to make those loans without exposing them to the degree of risk that could be there. It might be by way of the province guaranteeing to a certain extent the risk they would have to take. I think that would be money well spent. In fact the northern Ontario heritage fund used to operate that way at one time. It was fairly successful in being able to stimulate business opportunities in northern Ontario. I would argue that's one of the things we could be doing.

We could also be going in an opposite direction to the one this government is going in when it comes to workers' rights. This government says that what's good for business is to create the climate to allow them to do business. So they say, "We're going to make changes to the Employment Standards Act to allow employers to go to their employees and make side deals about what minimum hours of work there will be, when overtime will be paid, how much the wage will be, all kinds of scenarios." The government says, "We need that flexibility to stimulate the economy and allow that investment to come into the province."

It's fairly simple: I'm looking for a job. I go to the employer and the prospective employer says to me, "Gilles, I have a job for you and it pays \$7 an hour. You're going to be working 60 hours a week," and whatever other conditions the employer wants to put on.

“The only way I’m going to give you the job is by your signing under employment standards a waiver taking away your rights from the bare minimums that are available in the Employment Standards Act.” What do you think the employee is going to do? Of course the employee is going to accept the deal. The employee is looking for work and they’re going to do what they’ve got to do to be able to work, because that’s what most people want to do.

I would argue that what we need to do is to come at it the opposite way around. I think this government is wrong-minded in what it’s doing. What we should be doing is trying to find ways to do a couple of things. We should be looking at increasing the minimum the wage. I argue that an increase in the minimum wage will do more to stimulate the economy than giving me, who makes \$80,000 a year, a tax cut. I’ll take that money and invest it. That’s all I’m going to do with it, because I’m at a point in my life when I don’t need to spend the amount of money I did when my kids were younger.

But if you go to a hard-working couple who are younger, or even a single individual, who are trying to purchase their first home, their first car, their first snow machine, their stereo or whatever it is they’re trying to buy, if you increase the minimum wage, they’re going to spend that money directly in the community. I would argue an increase in the minimum wage would be a good economic policy for Ontario. The Americans have raised the minimum wage a number of times since Clinton has been in power and we’ve seen a net benefit to that economy. I see no reason why it wouldn’t do the same in Ontario.

We could take a look at, for example, what we could do by way of pensions for individuals in Ontario. There are many people in this province, as we well know, who are going to work 30, 35 or 40 years and end up without a pension. All the members of this provincial assembly are without pensions, other than RRSPs and even that is minimal. What is it? Four thousand dollars a year, I think, is what they give us for our pension. It’s not enough to retire on, even if you stayed here 30 years. What we need to do is to take a look at building a portable pension system that allows an individual to carry and build pension credits, no matter where they work.

The idea would not be to do away with the pension systems that already exist. For example, if I work at Abitibi-Price in Iroquois Falls, there’s a fairly good pension plan. It would not be to get rid of those, but to say there’s a minimum pension that people need to pay into. If that minimum is not met, then you automatically pay along with the employer into that pension plan, and no matter where you go, you carry it with you. After 30 or 35 years of work within the economy, you can start making some decisions about your retirement. The net effect of that is to give individuals security to be able to retire, but at the same time it allows them the choice, at a fairly young age, of getting out of the workforce or at least slowing down and getting out of some of the higher-pressure jobs or some of the harder jobs as far as physical

labour is concerned, and allow younger people to move into those.

It allows the natural recycling of people in the economy that now doesn’t happen because often many people who are 50, 55 or 60 years old, who would like to slow down and not work to the degree they did when they were 20 don’t have that option because the pensions they have are inadequate to allow them to retire. In most cases, people can’t afford to retire until age 65 and their CPP kicks in.

I would argue we should look at building a portable pension system, the type that allows people with 30 or 35 years of work to retire with about 60% of their income and base it on that. Anywhere somebody has a pension that meets that, they get exempted from having to pay into this public program, but if they go to work for an employer who doesn’t have the minimum pension you’re offering by way of this initiative, they pay into that one so that in the end they’re fully vested and they’ve got a 30- or 35-years-and-out clause at about 60 years of age.

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I would also argue that we should look at the issue of a comprehensive disability program. Presently in this province we have a number of disability programs that compete to deal with various disabled workers or individuals. We have workers’ compensation for those who are hurt on the job. We have Ontarians with disabilities for those Ontarians who unfortunately enough are disabled, either by way of accident or physical situation. We have short-term disability plans. We have long-term disability plans. We have EI programs. There are a multitude of programs we pay into to deal with the event that we become injured or sick and can’t work.

Why don’t we get rid of some of the duplication? Why don’t we look at developing a comprehensive disability program that says only one thing: you’re unable to work because you’re either sick or you’re injured, and let’s deal with that. If the medical comes back that you’re unable to work completely for a short period of time, you would go off on what would be 90% of your pre-disability income. If you’re off for longer than a year and you’re not going to return to your old job, then let’s deal with retraining you and getting you back to another job. If you’re completely disabled, let’s deal with that at a premium that makes sense for both the person who’s getting the benefit and for those of us who are paying.

There’s all kinds of duplication between programs that I think we can take a look at and try to pull together between the federal and provincial governments. My view would be that you should have one comprehensive disability program and one guaranteed annual minimum wage, so that you don’t have welfare and unemployment insurance trying to compete for the same unemployed person. Maybe the federal government can take the responsibility for unemployment, or the province, and then, conversely, the province or the federal government can take the issue of disability and sickness, and each level of government would be responsible for its own program, or maybe one level of government takes it all

and the other one gets out. All I know is that, as Mike Harris likes to put it, there's one taxpayer and we don't need one taxpayer having to fund various governments to do the same thing. I would argue there's a way to do that.

Last but not least, there is the whole issue of democracy. I believe we need to reform the system of antiquated parliamentary politics that we have here today. It is apparent by this debate that our system doesn't work. We have less than a handful of members in this House, most of whom are not paying a heck of a lot of attention. I notice a few Conservatives and a few Liberals who are listening. But by and large, it doesn't have an effect on the government because the government, even though they only got 42% of the vote, has a clear majority in this House. I would argue—

Interjection: That's why we have these midnight sittings.

Mr Bisson: I agree. That's another debate, but with 31 seconds left I'll leave that till later.

We need to reform our system of Parliament so that it more closely resembles what people voted for in an actual election. If 42% of the people of Ontario voted Conservative, we should have no more than 42% of the members in this House represented on the Conservative bench.

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): You didn't say that before 1990.

Mr Bisson: I have felt like that since before 1990, believe me. All the more reason why I feel the way I do.

Mr Speaker, I'm out of time and I thank you very much.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Further debate? The member for Simcoe North.

Mr Dunlop: I'd like to thank the members from Kitchener Centre, Timmins-James Bay and Essex for their comments on the second reading of Bill 162, the Supply Act, which of course is the act that formally approves all money that is spent by the government of Ontario until the end of this year.

I always talk about my riding, but I'd like to talk about some of the comments that were made a little earlier. Particularly, the member for Timmins-James Bay talked a lot about transportation. The member from Kitchener Centre has a cottage just north of my area. It's really nice to see that not only our government but previous governments have expanded Highway 400. It's now up in the MacTier area. What it has done, first of all, is move traffic at a very fast rate, as cottagers and transportation—trucking routes—go north. But the biggest thing it has done is make the highway safer.

Living in that area, where there is a lot of rock—the Canadian Shield—on the side of the highway, we've had some terrible accidents over the last 20 or 25 years. When we talk about transportation and government spending, I know we're now spending about \$1 billion a year under Minister Turnbull, and it's so nice to see that planning continues to go into these highways. I hope that at one point we can see two four-lane highways right

through to northern Ontario. I know we eventually want to get to Sudbury, and also to North Bay with Highway 11.

I'd like to take a few moments to talk about some of the very important investments our government has made in the area of health care in my riding of Simcoe North, and of course in our province in general. I know that this year, 2000-01, which this bill takes into account, we will be spending \$22.3 billion on health care in our province. We've been very fortunate in our riding this year to see a significant amount of money spent in different areas of health care. I was doing a quick calculation one day, trying to find out the exact amount of money that was spent on health care in the county of Simcoe. It's hard to get that total. When you look at the money the district health councils spend and what the doctors bill OHIP, it's very difficult to find that money. I estimate that our government is spending about \$750 million on health and long-term care in Simcoe county which, as mentioned earlier by the member for Timmins-James Bay, is one of the fastest-growing regions in our province, very similar to what we see in Kitchener and around the GTA.

When we talk about health care in Simcoe North, certainly the largest provider of health care in my riding is the Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital. For over 95 years this hospital has been serving the people of Simcoe North, particularly the Orillia and district area, but it also serves a huge portion of Victoria county as well as the southern portion of the district of Muskoka. At that hospital we have the regional renal dialysis centre. We have satellite hospitals in Alliston and now in Penetanguishene, Huntsville, Barrie and Collingwood.

Hospitals around the province are evaluated yearly in four general areas. The Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital is the only hospital in Ontario rated above average for the amount of staff time devoted to patients for two years in a row. As well, the hospital is a recipient of the National Quality Institute Canada Award for Excellence in quality health care for strong and ongoing commitment to continuously improving the patients' experience and responding to the changing needs of the community.

I was very happy, when I first was elected in June 1999, to have an opportunity to meet with the chairman of the board of directors and the hospital chief executive officer. We formed a very good relationship in that time period. We met on a weekly basis for a number of months, dealing with all the issues hospitals face, and particularly this hospital, because they've been looking at a redevelopment project at Soldiers' Memorial Hospital for close to 20 years. I know that back in the early 1980s when I was on county council, this hospital had come to the county looking for funding. I was really pleased that although they hadn't received the plans to go ahead, they came to me immediately after I was elected and we immediately started to work on plans to go ahead with that.

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The importance of this hospital to our community cannot be overstated. On June 7 this year I had the pleasure of announcing our government's commitment to invest \$14 million in capital funding for the redevelopment project at Soldiers' Memorial Hospital. In October, just a couple of months ago, our government committed another \$4.2 million, which brings the province's investment to just under \$18 million for this planned redevelopment. As we speak, the hospital has secured funding from the city of Orillia. We have also worked very strongly with the county of Simcoe so that the county will pay its portion of the hospital.

This hospital, by the way, is the second-largest hospital in the county of Simcoe. In size and the amount of funding, it falls behind the new Royal Victoria Hospital in Barrie, a hospital we're all very proud of. I heard the member for Kitchener Centre talk earlier about cancer care for the Kitchener area. I know Mr Tascona, the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, is doing a lot of work trying to secure funding, and eventually we hope to have a Cancer Care Ontario unit at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Barrie. Again, we're trying to look after the interests and health care of a very rapidly growing area of Simcoe county.

I want to pay a special tribute to a number of people on the board of directors and to the staff members at Soldiers' Memorial Hospital. I didn't mention it earlier, but the operating budget at that hospital is about \$46 million. When we were allowed to make the announcement, I remember Karen Wilford, the hospital's chairman of the board, saying, "The provincial government's support for our expansion is reassuring. With a total commitment of almost \$18 million, we are closer to our goal of expanding Soldiers' Memorial Hospital to meet the future needs of our patients." With this investment, the hospital will build a state-of-the-art wing to house a new emergency ward, pharmacy, lab, operating rooms and a diagnostic imaging centre.

At this time, I'd also like to make a few comments about the city of Orillia and the council there. The city has been very supportive of this project. In fact, the plans are to close one street so the expansion can go ahead, because they will need that space for the entry to the new emergency ward.

A lot of interesting things have happened in health care this year, and there have been a lot of special announcements on funding. Last month, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care provided Soldiers' Memorial, again, with almost \$494,000 of funding for acute care, rehabilitation and complex continuing care services. On top of that, a few weeks later they provided another \$400,000 in increased operating funding. We're not 100% sure that \$400,000 is the appropriate number at this time. I'm working with the hospital administrators to see whether we can't have that upped somewhat, because we feel we're a little short on that amount.

As well, I was really pleased at the beginning of this month that as part of the special care announcements, this

hospital received \$117,000 from our government for the expansion of the level-2 neonatal department. It was really exciting to be part of that announcement. It's not a lot of money when you look at it, but \$117,000 is going to buy some specialized equipment in the neonatal unit.

When we were in the hospital making the announcement, it was really exciting, because a young lady was there with her new baby. I think the baby was two months old and weighed about four pounds. But the baby was born at one and a half pounds and spent the first 80 days of its life at the level-3 care neonatal department at Mount Sinai. It was really exciting to see how the baby had improved, and that was at the level 2 neonatal department at Soldier's. The care this little baby received was exceptional, and this \$117,000 will go a long way toward the care other babies will need in the future of that hospital.

Simcoe North is also home to two other equally important hospitals, smaller hospitals but nonetheless very busy. The Penetanguishene General Hospital and the Huronia District Hospital in Midland saw inefficiencies a number of years ago, even before restructuring, and decided to form an alliance to eliminate those inefficiencies. They had an opportunity to reinvest those dollars and they saved that money and put it back into the health care system of our area.

One of the important elements in health care reform is health care providers working together to improve a system. That is what these two hospitals have done, and I commend them on their efforts. They each have separate boards, but they meet on a regular basis and are always looking for ways of finding inefficiencies in the system and continually work to improve on them.

The Huronia District Hospital in Midland—and we're talking about spending money in health care—received another \$1.1 million in early October as well to help with their operating funding.

Within my communities there are a number of dedicated health care professionals and many people who work hard to bring important services to Simcoe North. At this time I'd like to recognize the outstanding contribution of Mrs Exilda Robitaille of Penetanguishene, who last Friday at the Midland town party received a commendation from the town for her work in bringing a permanent dialysis unit to the Penetanguishene General Hospital.

Like other dialysis patients in this area, Mrs Robitaille's husband, Raymond, had to make the often treacherous drive to Orillia in winter three times a week so that he could receive treatment at the Soldiers' Memorial renal dialysis centre. At that time they wished there was a closer alternative. There was a total of approximately 20 people driving to Orillia from the Midland-Penetanguishene-Christian Island area, and with the winter conditions it was felt there was a need to have a dialysis centre in Penetang.

After Mr Robitaille passed away in 1998, Mrs Robitaille went on a campaign and worked with all the different foundations to raise a substantial amount of

money. First of all last fall, a year ago now, we got a temporary-dialysis announcement for the Midland-Penetanguishene area. Since that time Mrs Robitaille has worked with the foundation. There's one young lady, Leslie Monague, who crossed the sound between Christian Island and Penetanguishene and she raised \$16,000 herself. Mrs Robitaille is always having dances, she works with all the businesses in the community and has been able to, I think to date, raise about \$350,000 toward the permanent dialysis unit. After Mrs Elizabeth Witmer visited the town of Midland last summer she had an opportunity to visit the Penetanguishene General Hospital, and about five weeks ago the announcement was made that Penetanguishene General Hospital will have the permanent unit.

I had the honour of taking part in the opening of the temporary dialysis unit in Penetanguishene last winter and it was an exciting thing to see, people being able to use this two-chair facility. By next spring we will have an eight-chair facility in Penetanguishene.

Our government is a national leader in hospital restructuring and modernization to meet the needs of a growing and aging population. Since 1995, more than \$1.7 billion in capital funding has been provided for hospital construction and renovation projects. As we have said time and time again, health care is more than just hospitals. It is also about providing other types of health care to the people of this province.

Community care access centres play an important role in delivering health care services to the people of our communities. These centres have provided home nursing, physiotherapy, speech-language pathology, assisting with personal care in a wide range of services. In September of this year we had an additional \$3.1 million invested into the Simcoe County Community Care Access Centre to hire more nursing, homemaking and therapy service staff. As well, \$1 million was announced for other long-term-care health providers throughout Simcoe county.

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Reforming the province's health care system is a hard but necessary exercise. Our government consulted with health care providers, experts in the field and, most important, the people of this province. One of the key recommendations of the Health Services Restructuring Commission was the urge to create more long-term-care beds throughout Ontario, and our government is honouring that commitment. At the new Villages of Leacock Point Health Care Centre in Orillia we're building 112 new long-term-care beds. I'd like to thank the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. As I said earlier, she visited Midland and opened up the Hillcrest Village centre which was another 100 beds.

Behind all these long-term-care facilities there always seem to be very strong-willed people and hard-working entrepreneurs. I know with the Villages of Leacock Point, I'd like to pay special attention to the Jarlette family, David and Alex Jarlette, a father and son team, who have built a number of facilities across Ontario and they are currently building this new 112-bed unit in

Orillia, with plans to expand to other areas of the region as well. That facility will open this coming March.

The other facility that has just opened, the Hillcrest Village centre—I'd like to pay special attention to the Walter Enns and Jonathon Enns families. They've done a phenomenal job. The old St Andrews Centennial Manor, which was the original hospital in Midland, went through a number of changes over the last 100 years, and now they've got this beautiful new facility attached to the side of it. The plans are now to take the old facility and make it into more of a short-term-care facility.

Since the Harris government was elected, 533 new long-term-care beds have been allocated to Simcoe county. The provincial government has also committed to update 303 long-term-care beds in Simcoe county alone. Provincially, this government has committed to creating over 20,000 new health care beds, which will improve access to community-based services for an additional 100,000 Ontarians.

I'd like to leave a few minutes today for the member for Durham—he'd like to make a few comments—but there are a couple of other announcements that we had made in the way of health care. A couple of weeks back the minister made an announcement on an additional \$306,000 to reduce tobacco use in the county of Simcoe. That money, of course, would go to the Simcoe County District Health Unit. Over \$226,000 in funding will be provided for Simcoe county's Quit Smoking 2001 contest in support of smoke-free public places and workplaces. As well, there will be another \$80,000 in provincial funding through the Simcoe county Action on Tobacco program announced.

To me, it's always important that we spend money in our health unit systems because of the fact that we have to promote and protect our citizens, but I believe this money is well spent to reduce the use of tobacco by the citizens of Simcoe county. It's very similar to the money Mr Tascona wants spent through his private member's resolution on PSA testing, very similar to money well spent when you look at breast cancer screening clinics for women and also to the money we spent recently on flu shots throughout the whole province. I hope this will be a good sign for all the hospitals and emergency wards over the next few months, particularly around the Christmas season. I know the last couple of years a number of our emergency wards were tied up because of the flu, and the lack of heavy shots before that.

I'll stop at this time talking on the Supply Act and leave my remaining time to the member for Durham.

M^{me} Claudette Boyer : Il est vraiment malheureux que nous soyons en Chambre ce soir pour débattre de cette motion d'approvisionnement qui ne touche aucunement la vie des Ontariens et des Ontariennes, quand il y a tellement de dossiers importants sur lesquels on pourrait s'attarder.

Early childhood is a topic about which we should all be concerned, no matter on which side of the House we sit. Yet, today we are asked to debate the supply bill, which is basically irrelevant to the lives of Ontarians. I

think it is our duty in the House to talk about issues that matter to Ontarians. It's time to put people first.

Recently, a government-commissioned study entitled *Early Years Study: Reversing the Real Brain Drain*, undertaken by Dr Fraser Mustard and the Honourable Margaret McCain, was released. Its findings reveal some interesting information. The study indicates that a child's brain development in the years before three sets the foundation for lifelong learning, behaviour and health. This government's own commission has shown that early childhood development is absolutely essential to our children's future. But while this is known to be true, let's have a look at what the Harris government has done to ensure that our children are given a shot at succeeding in life.

Since the Harris government was first elected, social assistance has been cut by 22%. Today, children make up 42% of those who visit food banks in Ontario, and families with children are the fastest-growing group of homeless people. According to a recent report on poverty, 52% of urban Aboriginal children live in poverty, yet the Minister of Social Services refuses to meet with Aboriginal leaders to discuss this problem.

Campaign 2000 reports that one in five Ontario children lives in poverty. The Ontario 2000 auditor's report on children's aid services concludes that the Ministry of Social Services had insufficient assurance that children's needs were adequately assessed and that appropriate protection services had been provided in these instances. This speaks nothing of the Harris government cutbacks which touch children indirectly, such as its cuts to the funding of women's shelters, cuts to domestic violence helplines, and its recent labour legislation which will in effect force parents to work longer hours more often and be away from their kids for longer periods of time.

This government has made some strides toward helping children but it has not gone far enough. I would never suggest the Harris government is deliberately working against the interests of our children. I know this government is composed of members who have children and grandchildren and that they care about their development. But where I part company with this government is in its philosophy.

This government believes that the way we help children is by offering tax cuts. Well, tax cuts alone are not the answer.

Une réduction d'impôts n'a jamais construit de garderies, n'a jamais nourri un enfant qui a faim. Une réduction d'impôts n'a jamais libéré de places de surplus dans une garderie.

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Il faut vraiment s'attaquer à la pauvreté chez les jeunes de façon active. Ce n'est pas assez de couper les impôts et d'espérer que le petit montant d'argent sauvé sera suffisant pour faire vivre nos jeunes dans un environnement sain et enrichissant.

Je sais que ce gouvernement ne sera pas content d'entendre ce que j'ai à dire, parce que je vais le dire, que

pour le bien-être de nos enfants, il faut dépenser de l'argent. Il faut y mettre l'argent nécessaire. Il faut dépenser de l'argent pour assurer que nos jeunes puissent bénéficier de tous les avantages que peut alimenter notre économie éclatante.

I will give credit to this government for at least recognizing that something needs to be done with regard to early childhood education. The Early Years Study, the challenge fund and Ontario's Promise are all initiatives that are welcome by those who care about early education development. But once again the message the government is sending with these pieces of legislation is that the government's role in fixing the real problems facing early childhood development is that of a supervisor instead of a provider.

Two of its most recent announcements, the challenge fund and Ontario's Promise, are government-led initiatives which require little work or imagination on the government's behalf. In both cases it is the private sector that must do the work. The government says that one of its top priorities is early childhood education, yet it leaves the responsibility primarily up to the private sector.

With Ontario's Promise, for example, the Harris government says it is committed to Ontario's young people, yet with Ontario's Promise it relies on donations from the business sector and offers virtually no government resources.

Le gouvernement doit faire plus que de simplement gérer les ressources du secteur privé. Si ce gouvernement est vraiment sérieux lorsqu'il nous dit que la petite enfance est une priorité, il doit donc agir de façon à nous démontrer que c'est vrai. Pourquoi le gouvernement Harris a-t-il peur d'investir de l'argent dans les programmes sociaux ? Pourquoi le gouvernement Harris refuse-t-il d'investir dans le futur de nos jeunes enfants ? Les réponses sont devant nos yeux. La pauvreté chez les jeunes enfants est un problème social que nous devons éliminer. Mais pour ce faire, nous avons besoin d'un gouvernement qui voit nécessaire de prioriser les dossiers de la petite enfance.

Une étude fédérale il y a quelques années démontrait tristement que 65 % des enfants âgés de moins de six ans dans la ville de Vanier, une partie de mon comté, vivaient sous le seuil de la pauvreté. Ce chiffre est bien au-delà du nombre national de 20 %, qui lui-même est trop élevé. À l'aube de ce nouveau millénaire, il n'y a pas lieu d'avoir encore autant de pauvreté dans notre province.

I encourage the Harris government to take a lead and meet its responsibility to the children of Ontario. I encourage the Harris government to do more than simply turn to the private sector for help. Corporate Ontario is not responsible for our children. We should not be asking banks, corporations and private businesses to look after the well-being of our children.

Ontarians need to know they can turn to the government for help when they need it. Ontarians need to know that the government cares about their concerns and is trying to address them. By passing the buck to the private

sector, the Harris government is saying that early childhood development is just another issue best handled by the private sector. This is unacceptable.

The private sector has a role to play in developing a positive future for our children, but that role needs to be a supporting, not a starring, role. The whole reason for having a government in the first place is to manage the resources at its disposal in order to foster and nurture the collective well-being of citizens. Let me ask you, what resource is more important to the future of our province than our children? How better to ensure a bright future for Ontario than to invest in our children in their most formative years? How terribly sad that the Harris government doesn't recognize it all the time.

Nous avons besoin d'un gouvernement qui prend ses responsabilités. Nous avons un gouvernement qui n'a pas de vision démontrant comment il veut diriger cette province vers l'avenir. Pour Dalton McGuinty et le Parti libéral, la petite enfance a toujours été une priorité et la sera toujours. Nous croyons sur ce côté que ça prend plus que de simples réductions d'impôts pour assurer un futur adéquat pour nos jeunes. Un gouvernement libéral fera tout en son pouvoir pour réduire la pauvreté chez les jeunes. C'est primordial.

Je suis fière des jeunes enfants de mon comté. J'ai à coeur leur bien-être. Je veux qu'ils aient accès à tous les moyens possibles pour fonctionner à leur plein potentiel.

Enfin, je vais prendre cette occasion pour souhaiter à tous mes collègues de la Législature un joyeux Noël et, bien sûr, les mêmes souhaits à tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes.

May the season find you all in good spirits and in good health. May the new year be the best of all for everyone.

Permettez-moi, avant de terminer, de vous parler d'un événement dont je suis fière. Comme vous avez tous pu le constater, vous avez reçu une carte de Noël de la députée d'Ottawa-Vanier. Ma carte de Noël a été un concours de dessin chez les jeunes de maternelle et jardin de mon comté.

I have received overwhelming feedback in response to my holiday card contest open to junior and senior kindergartens from across the four school boards in my riding. Four drawings were chosen to become the Ottawa-Vanier MPP's Christmas card.

En tant que parente, ex-enseignante et grand-maman, ce fut un réel plaisir pour moi de retourner dans les écoles et de voir l'excitation dans les visages des enfants à l'approche du temps des fêtes.

It was rewarding to see their excitement. It's so important to believe in early childhood.

Quelle joie, et quelle excellente façon d'amorcer la saison des fêtes en collaboration avec notre petite enfance.

Believe me, it is worth investing in early childhood. Merci.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): As the audience probably wonders why the members are talking about such a great variety of topics tonight, I

think it should be pointed out that this is a supply motion that we're dealing with which basically allows the government to pay its bills while Parliament is not in session, so greater latitude is given to allow people to talk about various subjects.

As you know, we get many news releases from the government, and the one that struck me today states that the province is to review the property assessment process and that Marcel Beaubien, the MPP from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, has been appointed as special adviser.

We all know that when the province promised to bring in market value assessment, it didn't do so. They called it current value assessment, but basically the same definition is used in both acts. The people of Ontario were left with the belief some two or three years ago that we were going to a market value system. We now know that's not the case. As many thousands of people are finding out clear across this province, how the government and the property assessment corporation interpret market value assessment is not the way you and I interpret market value assessment. You and I say market value is whatever a willing buyer is willing to pay to a willing seller at a given moment for a particular piece of property. That's the way it was explained to us in the House; that's what is was intended to be. We now know that's not the case and that there are over 600,000 appeals pending.

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I would urge the people of Ontario, particularly those who feel their properties have been assessed too high, to get a hold of the Ministry of Finance, and particularly Mr Beaubien, who is the special adviser who's looking into Ontario Property Assessment Corp, because he will conduct, according to his press release, a comprehensive review of the regulation that defines property classification. I would suggest that all those people who filed appeals get hold of Mr Beaubien as well, since he's to report by March 31.

The next thing I want to talk about is that much has been said here tonight about how the government is spending more money on health care than ever before, and yes, to a certain amount, that's true. But let's also remember what the Provincial Auditor pointed out in the report he unveiled last week: that the government is looking at announcements that are made with respect to capital funding and reporting them in its financial statements as if those dollars are actually spent in the year the announcement is made, when in fact the dollars aren't spent for another two or three years. So it obviously looks as if they're spending a heck of a lot more money in this given year on health care, particularly in the restructuring area, than they're actually doing.

Let me quote to you, from a couple of sections, what the Provincial Auditor has stated, because it isn't only happening in health care, it's also happening in other fields. I'll read this to you:

"Over the last few years, there has been a trend in Ontario to approve and treat as a current year's expenditures grants and other transfers that are provided to fund the activities of future periods. These types of transactions

are particularly attractive to governments in years when revenues exceed expenditures and the amount of the surplus is greater than that expected and budgeted," which was the case last year. It says that "such transfers can distort annual operating results."

It goes on to say that in the May 2000 budget, "\$1 billion in capital grant funding ... was based on plans submitted by each hospital prior to March 31, 2000." It included the 70% that the province is supposed to pay as well as the 30% that is to come from the local taxpayers. "The government recorded the entire \$1 billion as a liability and expenditure for the 1999-2000 fiscal year. The actual funds were advanced to the hospitals shortly after the budget announcement in May 2000." Finally the auditor says, "I firmly believe the practice of charging multi-year funding to the current year's operations must cease."

In other words, the government may be saying it's spending \$22 billion on health care funding, but it's not doing so. It is including the announcements in that amount of about a billion dollars of work that will actually be done later on. And then, as is well known by this government, when they actually do start some of these projects later on, they will announce them again, thereby having people believe there's new money coming in all the time.

This government, over the last five years, has been well known to do this time and again. You make an announcement, you don't really spend the money until some time later on and you make the announcement again. Just as a matter of interest, it's done the same thing with respect to a number of other items; for example, the \$500 million to the Ontario Innovation Trust, which I think is a good idea. Last year it shows that \$500 million was spent, but in actual fact, the auditor says, only \$2.5 million in the trust funds had been expended by March 31. Even if you take into account the commitments, there was only another \$158 million in commitments. He states that the actual disbursements and commitments amounted to only \$160 million, not the \$500 million the government says it's spending there. In other words, the government is trying to make it look as if it is doing a lot more in these areas than it's really doing.

With the Minister of Education in the House, I think she'd be interested in knowing that it goes on to say, dealing with the education budget, that the budget of May 2000 "also announced support of \$268 million to four district school boards," and that actually that money was not expended until this year, so again it looks as if there was \$268 million more spent in education funding than was actually the case.

The other issue I very quickly want to bring up once again, and I've talked about this before, is this whole question of the doctor shortage. Depending upon whose numbers you want to believe, the government says there's a shortage of about 400 doctors in the province; other figures indicate it may be closer to 800 to 1,000 doctors. The government believes it's really doing something in that regard. I think this year they added

something like 55 new spaces in medical schools and they also increased the number of foreign-trained doctors who may go into a residency situation by 12.

I say to the government once again that there are many foreign-trained doctors—I know a few of them who have made their cases known to me—people who are competent and qualified, as we certainly want them to be, who basically have to jump over hurdle after hurdle in order to get approved to practise medicine in this province. Let me once again say I truly believe these people ought to be competent according to our standards. We have over 200 of these foreign-trained individuals, many of whom are working as cleaners, as taxi drivers, in a lot of different work areas, but not practising medicine.

I say to the government, if we have a shortage, whether it's 400 or 800 family physicians in this province, why don't we take advantage of these individuals? Why don't we try to qualify these people as quickly as possible? Why don't we put pressure on the College of Physicians and Surgeons and on the Ontario Medical Association and get these people approved? Over 200 people wait year after year to write the necessary exams. I do not understand why community after community has to go without doctors in this province when we've got this valuable resource of individuals who have been trained somewhere else. Why don't we allow these people to practise in the province of Ontario, or at least allow them to write the necessary exams as quickly as possible? What the government has done in this particular area is minuscule at best.

Finally, I want to talk to you very briefly about the education peace plan that was announced this weekend by my leader, Dalton McGuinty, and our education critic, Gerard Kennedy. Opposition parties are always criticized for not coming up with suggested solutions to problems. We know that within our education system the morale is at an all-time low. We know that teachers are overstressed and overworked and that many students across this province are not getting the benefit of extracurricular activities. I would once again ask the minister, who is in the House today, to take a look at this plan. It has been accepted by some people as being workable.

Basically, what it would do is allow you to meet your target of a teacher teaching 1,050 minutes per week in school by extending each teaching period in a high school by eight minutes so that each individual teacher in effect would teach 30 more minutes. At the same time, the teachers would not be placed in the position where in effect they would have to teach four classes in a semester system. They would still be teaching three classes, three periods of close to 90 minutes. I would ask the Minister of Education to take a very serious look at this plan. Don't reject it out of hand just because it comes from the opposition. The government side is always asking us, "Why don't you come up with some positive solutions?" This education peace plan is the positive solution to a very difficult problem. It's really a win-win solution. The government wins because the teachers have more teaching time. The students win because they hopefully

will get their extracurricular activities back. Everybody wins in that situation. After all, it's for the benefit of our young students, so I ask the minister to take a look at the education peace plan and implement it as soon as possible.

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The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's certainly a distinct pleasure to be able to rise, with the very limited amount of time I have, to speak on behalf of the people of my riding. I want to make it very clear from the very beginning that the first and most important responsibility I have is to represent the interests of my constituents. One of the members earlier took far more time than he was entitled to, which leaves me a mere five minutes to get the message out.

We're really speaking, I believe, on a supply bill, which allows me as one of the members of the government caucus to speak on a number of subjects.

I want to pay a little bit of respect to my constituents in the riding of Durham. Arguably, it's one of the finest ridings, as the Minister of Agriculture said, in all of Ontario. There would be those who would dispute that—

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole:—perhaps some are here tonight—but it's one of the top two ridings in the province of Ontario, according to him.

First of all, I was speaking to one of my constituents. I can't reveal the name because of the freedom-of-information issue that's before us; Mr Galt would know all about that. But one of my constituents by the name of Helen called and said, "John"—they all know me as John—"you never speak about the ordinary people." You should know that that's exactly who I represent, the ordinary people.

Speaking from the heart, frequently when I'm up—I'm not up that frequently, but frequently when I'm up—I speak about the importance of agriculture. The Minister of Agriculture is here. He's been to my riding innumerable times and has always made himself available on the issues, whether it's the price of commodities or the market revenue issue, which I know he very strongly supports. I know he's trying to get Lyle Vanclief to—you know, the Liberals quite often, even here in the House, aren't up to the job, but he challenged them. He made sure that Ontario farmers get their fair share.

The last time I was up, I was speaking about the important initiatives by Minister Margaret Marland on children, and Ontario's Promise has been mentioned here tonight. There are five key commitments that this government has made, and I can assure you as a member of that caucus advisory committee that we put that as the paramount way of bringing Ontario into the future: looking after our children and making sure they have the right resources in their family, in a secure place and with a good education, to get them to be secure citizens in this province of Ontario.

Tonight, as a member of the Red Tape Commission, I want to review a number of important initiatives. Mr

Spina has recently been appointed to the Red Tape Commission as the co-chair. They've made a commitment to eliminate barriers to small business, and that's probably going to be my primary focus. This small brochure—this isn't an aid—is *The Red Tape Commission Wants to Help You*. It's a little booklet, and if you ever want to find out more, you can contact us at the Web site, www.redtape.gov.on.ca, and you'll get many of the initiatives.

We had a very interesting briefing today by one of the deputy minister's people on excellence in the public civil service today. Government members, as elected people, are only one of the important agents to bring about reform in Ontario. The strategic commitments here are to providing strong leadership and quality service, increasing public satisfaction with Ontario's public service. "Ontario will measure up to the external benchmarks in the private and public sector," and the Ontario public service will be viewed as quality organizations to measure against.

I think the best way to look at that, for example, would be if someone lost their wallet. How many federal, provincial, and municipal organizations would you have to call—outside of the private sector, credit cards and everything—to actually solve the problem? What we're trying to develop is one window with no barriers to solving consumers' problems.

I think the most important initiative is to look at trying to organize government along the lines of providing not just barriers but service. Quality service is focused not just on business but on recognizing ordinary people's needs, measuring it against the best standards in the world. It's being measured through ongoing learning improvements and requiring sustained commitments and leadership from the top. That means eliminating all the barriers that are often—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Further debate?

Mr Sergio: I'm delighted to join the debate on this motion tonight as we move toward the end of the session.

Let me say in the few minutes I have that over the last few years we have heard the government, and especially the Premier, say, "We are not the government. We are the ones who came to fix the government." If we look at the five or six years of Premier Harris's Conservative government, we know the kind of government they delivered. We know what they did to fix the government.

I want to make some comments and use not necessarily my own words, but comments from someone who is non-elected, non-partisan and who is not part of either side of this House. It is someone who has been appointed by the government to be independent and to keep an eye on the actions and deeds of this government. I'm speaking of the Ontario auditor, Mr Erik Peters. I want to make some comments and to quote directly from his report, which I think members are aware came down on November 21 this year.

It was entitled the Special Report on Accountability and Value for Money. This perhaps should have been the leading text of one of the government bills. They pride

themselves on attaching such text to practically every bill they introduce in the House. It would have done justice to the government if they had introduced a bill that would have given the Ontario taxpayers exactly that, and I mean accountability and value for their money. But I have to say the auditor found the management of this government for the last four or five years in terrible, sad shape, even worse than the previous NDP government. My goodness, how bad do you have to be to beat that record?

Let me read a couple of quotes. This is some of the language the auditor used. He revealed growing government waste, boondoggles and possible corruption. Those are heavy words: "possible corruption." How about that? "Waste and lack of accountability are on the rise under the fiscally tight-fisted Tories." "Tories face growing problems related to privatization, outsourcing and arm's-length delivery of public service." I'll come back to that.

I quote directly from the report: "Last year's report and this year's report have more serious problems than previous ones." "Inspections of ... water treatment plants declined ... from over 400 to about 190 a year, over the past five years." Shall we say why we have Walkerton? I wonder if the Premier and the government are taking note of that. Just some of the content of that report.

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Unfortunately I don't have time to really sift through all the report, but just to mention a couple of the major things, first of all he said the credit rating of this government is even worse than the credit rating of Mr Rae's government. Do you know what this does to the debt, the \$24 billion the government has added to the total debt since 1995? We are paying through the nose. Taxpayers are paying more because of the very poor rating they have accumulated.

What does the auditor say? They have spent some \$500 million on things such as VCRs, TVs, computers, with no records. No one knows because there are no records and nothing is on hand. If a private corporation had a record like this, everybody would be fired. They would have built one huge bill and accused everybody of total corruption.

Half of the \$60 billion the government spends is funnelled through private companies, private corporations and non-profit agencies. This is not me saying this. Maybe they don't like it, but that's too bad. Half of that \$60 billion that is spent is funnelled through private corporations, private companies, non-profit agencies and other delivery agents that don't have to answer to the taxpayer. Isn't that wonderful? More than \$30 billion of taxpayers' money and they are not accountable to this House, to this Premier, to this government, to the people of Ontario. Isn't that wonderful? What does that say for accountability of this government?

You know, \$750 million—no way of ensuring those funds were spent in a wise manner. Do we know that? Do taxpayers know that? They wouldn't unless we had an independent person such as the auditor, Mr Peters, to dig that out and shove it in the face of the government and say, "This is the record of your government."

I wonder what happened to the whiz kids. The government gave somebody, some of their friends, some of their companies, \$275 million to transfer Ontario land titles on to computers—I don't know how many there are, probably a few million. But \$275 million sounds like a lot of money. I wonder, if we were to tender that publicly, openly, to some of the Ontario computer whiz kids over there—the auditor says you guys are up to \$1 billion and it's not going to take one year but 10. Is this accountability?

My time is slipping by, but I want to mention a couple of other factors which, I should say, are not appropriate for this time of the year but are appropriate to the actions of this government. I want to address very briefly the situation of the poor people in our province, not only the poor people but the poor young people. Young kids living below the poverty line have almost doubled in Ontario. With the well-being and the economic boom we have in Ontario, I think it's totally unacceptable that we have such a terrible record. This was in the December 16 *Globe and Mail*—sometimes it's a Liberal paper. It's right in here: the number of children living in poverty has climbed by some 400,000, or 42%, since 1989 and has nearly doubled in Ontario. How shameful.

This is from the December 18 *Maclean's*-Global Television poll: they don't mention the economy, employment or unemployment, spending, national unity, crime, violence, whatever any more. They pinpoint, at 45%, social services, health and education as the most important problems facing Canadians and Ontarians. Are you listening, Mr Premier? Are you listening, Mr Harris? Where is the priority? For 45%, it is social services, health and education.

Today I brought to the attention of the Minister of Health the case of a woman who is in a very dire situation. Because of breast cancer, she has developed a condition called lymphedema. She has to travel all the way from the Eglinton and Steeles area to Scarborough General to receive treatment from a machine that is only at that place. She doesn't drive and her husband doesn't drive. She has to travel in these weather conditions to receive the treatments; otherwise she won't get any treatments. I was asking the minister today, why not provide one of those machines in the west end of the city? She didn't answer. She said, "We've been spending a lot of money. The service should be there." The fact is that the service, the care, is not there.

While I have another few minutes, I will concede the remaining time to my colleague to continue in the same tone.

Merry Christmas to all.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Renfrew-Pembroke-Nipissing.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Renfrew will do just fine.

I want to join the supply debate and simply say that this is one of those important debates, one of Parliament's most basic of rights and responsibilities. The old

call: "There shall be no supply, said Parliament, without a redress of our grievances." Nobody probably cares about it any more since we live in this age of executive tyranny, but that is the principle, and if ever this place gets to a point where it understands its institutional prerogatives, God knows what might happen.

I'm glad to have the Minister of Education here tonight because there is an issue that is very much on the minds of people, certainly in my county and I think in much of the province, and that has to do with special education funding.

I've been in touch with her staff, and they have committed to talk to people at the Renfrew county public school board, but I want to say to the minister, who is a very hard-working minister, I'm told and I believe, that there does seem to be a real issue with the validation rate. I have in front of me a chart. I met a few weeks ago with some people at the Renfrew county public school board, good people, long experienced in this business, and people who are quite prepared to say, "Listen, a number of the funding changes that have been made by the current government have been advantageous," but they are really puzzled by what they're seeing in the validation rate.

Let me just give you the three years: in 1998-99 our public school board had an approval rate of about 98%, in 1999-2000 it dropped to 63% and for this year it looks like the approval rate will be below 40%. They are absolutely mystified at the board office. The superintendent of special ed and a number of others who are very, very knowledgeable about and experienced with the old procedures and the new formula just don't understand what's happening here. I don't expect an answer tonight, I say to the minister, and I want to credit her staff, who listened to my general summary a few days ago and have committed to talking to Russ Holmberg, who's the superintendent at the public school board.

But I want to take tonight's supply debate opportunity to reinforce a very serious concern of people who are very professional and who are looking at this and saying, "There's something wrong here," and they don't know what it is. They have told me that they have been very careful and prudent as to the files they have developed and submitted. They are not a board, they tell me, that has submitted a lot of bogus cases, expecting the Ministry of Education to clean them out. But they have now got an approval rate that is down below 40%, and that has implications of a very dramatic and deleterious kind to the special education students in my county. So I want to take that moment tonight to ask the minister for her review of that. I do hope there is some positive answer to the concerns that have been made by my public school board in Renfrew county.

I was struck as well by a report in today's National Post, a journal I read with great interest. The article by Tom Blackwell, "Retiring Teachers Ring Alarm Bells"—I was astonished to see those numbers. They may not be accurate, but it's stated in this article that for the next five years the expectation over at the College of Teachers is

that something like an average of 9,000 teachers will retire. If that's remotely accurate, that's 40,000 to 50,000 retirements over the next five years. That is going to provide a lot of opportunity, obviously, but it's certainly going to aggravate an issue that my colleagues and I'm sure the minister's colleagues have been raising, namely, an adequate supply of qualified teachers in the classroom.

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I meant to bring it and I didn't, but there was a very interesting study done by a blue-ribbon panel in the United States a couple of years ago. One of the findings it made on the basis of that which really improves the educational results we all want was that it was very important, according to this analysis—granted, an American one, but fairly recent—that few things were as important as having a qualified teacher teaching in the classroom or the library or the resource centre in an area where he or she had specialized training.

It wasn't just a matter of having a qualified teacher in the classroom, but it was even more important to have the chemistry specialist teaching chemistry and to have the English specialist teaching English. I draw to the House's attention that if these data are at all accurate, we are really faced with an extraordinary challenge. I hope the minister and her officials are looking at some extraordinary measures that in my view would be justified to meet the requirement that we make every effort to ensure there are qualified teachers with specialization in the areas, particularly in areas like science and mathematics, and that that be done.

Certainly in my part of the province we're now finding that people like the high-tech community in Ottawa-Carleton are becoming a really magnetic pole for people who are in the school system and are now finding that they can go and work for Nortel or Cisco or Alcatel and earn substantially more money.

At any rate, there's a lot said and done about what's good and bad with the school system. If we have 40,000 to 50,000 qualified teachers retiring, I hope we have a plan to have 40,000 to 50,000 qualified teachers ready to take those places.

Speaking about my part of the province—and the parliamentary assistant for transportation is here tonight; I think the member for Etobicoke North—there was a report in the Ottawa Citizen on the weekend about the increasing gridlock around, yes, Ottawa. I was in a bookstore in Arnprior on Friday afternoon and a couple of my constituents who live in south Renfrew and who work in the Ottawa area were complaining, and complaining rather vociferously, that on Friday, for example, it took something like 90 minutes to go from downtown Ottawa to Arnprior, a distance of about 60 kilometres. In fact, I was listening to a radio program in Ottawa on Friday afternoon and virtually all of the guests who were supposed to be at this program—

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): Because of the snow.

Mr Conway: Well, it wasn't a snowy day on Friday in Ottawa, and it's a real issue. It's a real issue for people

in Ottawa, but I'll tell you a lot of people I represent living in communities like Arnprior, Braeside, McNab, Renfrew and Calabogie commute daily into Ottawa and they told me in no uncertain terms on Friday at the Arnprior bookstore, "Do something to relieve the congestion in the Ottawa transportation system."

Interjections.

Mr Conway: I've got to compete with this?

The Deputy Speaker: Would the members come to order. If they're going to have private conversations, take them outside.

Mr Conway: It is a serious concern, and I expect my friend Brian Coburn is quoted in the Citizen article on Saturday as saying that the government should be looking at a new ring road from Kanata around to the southeast perimeter of the new Ottawa. It's an issue and my constituents who depend on good access in and out of the national capital hope the government is going to accelerate plans.

I always like—poor Turnbull's not here tonight but I'm sure he's doing important work elsewhere—to use this opportunity to say, in the most recent statement from the department of the treasury, what are we told? We are told that gasoline taxation revenues are up \$106 million this year. Let me repeat to anybody out there listening: there are now \$2.26 billion worth of gasoline tax revenues coming to Queen's Park.

Mr O'Toole: Run for Ottawa.

Mr Conway: If you want to run for Ottawa, I say to O'Toole, you missed your chance. Lots of people want to run municipally and federally. I just assume I'm looking at and working with 103 people who really want to be here.

All I'm saying is that we have \$2.26 billion of gasoline tax revenues, \$106 million more this year than last year. Add to that \$665 million of fuel tax revenues and \$920 million worth of motor vehicle and registration fees, and that gives you some \$3.8 billion worth of road-related taxes. We are spending, we are told, \$1 billion on the roads system. That's good, but it is roughly one third of the road-related taxation we are taking in.

In my part of the world, let me tell you, where there's little public transport, people are prepared to pay these road taxes, but they expect that the road taxes are going to be reinvested in road-related activities, that you're not going to be cutting income taxes and corporate taxes and depending, to a greater degree, on road-related taxes to fund general government programs. That is, for my constituents and people in rural Oxford, a tax on geography. That's not fair and it is very dangerous in a province like Ontario.

Yes, there have been some good works done, but I repeat: There are very real needs out there in my part of the province where the good news is, as my friend Stewart was saying earlier this afternoon, "The economy is doing well." It certainly is doing well around Ottawa. People in Ottawa and Arnprior are expecting that we are going to reinvest some of those dividends to assist with those road-related activities.

Let me say something about a health-related issue in eastern Ontario. I have been struck by the number of people, many of them older people, living in places like Petawawa and Barry's Bay and Eganville and Beachburg and Chalk River who, in the last number of months, have had their surgery cancelled at the Ottawa Hospital because there has been an insufficient number of medical surgical beds.

Why is that the case? Because we are told that up to 15% of the active treatment or medical surgical beds at the Ottawa Hospital are tied up with people who don't need those beds, who need an alternative level of care, but there are insufficient nursing and chronic care beds. Can you imagine being a 75-year-old woman coming from the upper reaches of Killaloe or Barry's Bay and being told that you've got surgery, going through the pre-op preparation, going two hours down the highway and being told at the operating door, "Sorry, we can't deal with you." That's happened more than once.

I don't expect magical cures, but we have taken a lot of the flexibility out of the system. I know those were the bad old days. This bed blocking is a very serious issue, not just for people in—

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): Bed wetting?

Mr Conway: I don't think you want—

Mr Murdoch: I remember when you joined the NDP—

Mr Conway: This is a very serious subject. There are many of us here, Bill, who want to know if you're going to leave the Social Credit and join a Conservative Party. That day may come before I depart the scene.

This bed-blocking business is a very serious issue. It is affecting real people with real medical needs. The answer clearly is, in part, for the minister to licence additional alternative level of care beds, not just in Ottawa but in places like Renfrew and Pembroke—

Mr Sampson: And Eganville.

Mr Conway: My friend the former minister of corrections says, "And Eganville." We will take as many of those beds as we can in Renfrew county.

I'm not here to be too self-centred or too parochial, but I'm telling you, I have had too many constituents, some of them very closely associated with the current administration in the province of Ontario, very unhappy about the fact that, not once but in some cases twice they've gone down the road to Ottawa for surgery and been told, "Sorry. Go home. We don't know when we're going to be able to take you." The head of the medical staff at the Renfrew hospital was quoted just a couple of weeks ago as saying he had five patients in Renfrew who are in this situation.

It's serious and something that deserves some attention, and I hope that before supply is granted, my friend the Minister of Health will have more—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. We have concluded the time available for debate.

Mr Wilson has moved second reading of Bill 169, An Act to authorize the payment of certain amounts for the

Public Service for the fiscal year ending on March 31, 2001.

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

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. The motion is carried.

Pursuant to standing order 63, the bill is ordered for third reading.

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SUPPLY ACT, 2000

LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2000

Mr Baird moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 169, An Act to authorize the payment of certain amounts for the Public Service for the fiscal year ending on March 31, 2001 / Projet de loi 169, Loi autorisant le paiement de certaines sommes destinées à la fonction publique pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2001.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. The motion is carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

CORRECTIONS ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LA RESPONSABILISATION EN MATIÈRE DE SERVICES CORRECTIONNELS

Mr Baird moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 144, An Act to establish accountability in correctional services, to make offenders demonstrate that they are drug-free, to set rules for offenders to earn their release, to give the Board of Parole a say in earned release decisions, and to change the name of the Board of Parole / Projet de loi 144, Loi visant à instituer la responsabilisation au sein des services correctionnels, à obliger les délinquants à démontrer qu'ils ne font pas usage de substances intoxicantes, à fixer les règles que doivent suivre les délinquants pour mériter leur libération, à permettre à la Commission des libérations conditionnelles d'intervenir dans les décisions en matière de libération méritée et à changer le nom de la Commission des libérations conditionnelles.

Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek): It's a pleasure to participate in the debate on third reading of this bill. What is interesting about this bill is that the debate to this point has been rather fascinating. When we started, really what we had was debate polarized around the issue of whether privatization was good or bad. What was interesting in the discussions was that as we started to move forward, when we started to talk about the actual bill itself, we noticed that a number of Liberal members

started to realize that public-private partnerships are not something foreign to all levels of government, that as a matter of fact some of them had participated in private-public partnerships as municipal politicians and had made decisions to go down that road. So the debate kind of veered away from private-public partnership, good and bad, and got into discussion around the issue of safety.

The member for Sudbury, for example, is quoted as saying, "I think we must ensure that the people of Ontario understand that this bill is not about privatization. It should be about public safety. On this side of the House, both parties believe that public safety should be the factor that determines anything." I was very pleased at that point that they had realized private-public partnerships were something that had become part of the norm for all levels of government. In terms of safety, the reality is that if we provide tough ministry standards for operation and performance, if we ensure the Ministry of Correctional Services maintains—

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): On a point of order, Speaker: I certainly don't want to detract from this member, who I understand to be the parliamentary assistant for health, but I would just like to ask for your ruling. This bill has been called for third reading tonight. It stands in the name of the minister of corrections. Neither the minister of corrections nor his parliamentary assistant is taking carriage of this bill. I'm asking you to find out whether that is appropriate. Is it parliamentary?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): It is in order. The Minister of Community and Social Services moved the bill.

Mr Clark: I thank the member for Kingston and the Islands for his comment.

Again, if it's an issue of safety and the ministry puts in place standards to ensure that safety is there, to ensure the public interest is in place, then really it becomes an issue that there are at least, in my reading, seven members of the opposition who support drug treatment for prisoners, which is another part of the bill, and who don't have a problem with public-private partnerships. So it's going to be interesting.

I sit here and feel like the little kid at Christmastime waiting to open up that gift and see what's inside. I'm waiting to see whether there are members on the opposition side who are actually going to stand up and have the courage to vote with the government on this bill. The members for St Catharines, Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, Kingston and the Islands, York Centre, Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, Thunder Bay-Atikokan and Davenport did support a resolution dealing with drug treatment, which is a very important part of Bill 144. If the reality is that public-private partnerships happen in the federal government, in provincial governments and in regional governments, and they do—the Hamilton-Wentworth airport is a public-private partnership. If you're going to compare a correctional facility to an airport for safety, I think there would be more concerns in a community about an airport—747s flying in with

ground control and traffic controllers. Yet the regional government of Hamilton-Wentworth privatized that, a public-private partnership.

Mr Rob Sampson (Mississauga Centre): How's it going?

Mr Clark: It's going extremely well, as a matter of fact. Passenger traffic is up, cargo traffic is up and there have been no difficulties with safety. So again you're looking at a private-public partnership working.

I'm looking at this and thinking to myself, there have to be at least seven members over there. The new member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot made a very interesting comment in the debate—

Mr Sampson: He was probably in favour of it.

Mr Clark: He was in favour of it. This one comment I want to come to in my last minute on the whole issue of values: "I believe ... that while we should only have the government we need, we must insist on all the government we require." Sounds Conservative.

Mr Sampson: Is he a Liberal, though?

Mr Clark: He is a Liberal.

When you read it, he actually supports drug testing. The member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot was on the regional government when they brought in a private-public partnership for the airport, so clearly he supports private-public partnerships. As a matter of fact, the regional government in Hamilton has one for water and sewage treatment. So I can't see him opposing this bill.

I recall that shortly after his election the member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot, Liberal Ted McMeekin—this is in the Hamilton Spectator—"vows he isn't going to be a desk-thumping seal like so many other backbenchers at Queen's Park."

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Mr Sampson: He called them seals?

Mr Clark: Yes, he did. "He says he won't applaud if party leader Dalton McGuinty says something silly in the Legislature, and he'll stand up and say, 'Well done' if Premier Mike Harris says something smart." But then the columnist asked this question. It's an important question. We should be listening. "The real test of McMeekin's political courage, of course, will be whether he actually votes with the Tories on a government bill."

Mr Sampson: Do you think he will?

Mr Clark: I think the question has come. I have faith in him. I look at this present. I'm going to unwrap this present in a couple of days and I think the member is going to vote in favour of this bill. He supports drug treatment. He supports private-public partnerships. Heck, he passed two of them when he was a regional councillor and he has vowed not to be a desk-thumping seal.

Mr Sampson: But he'll fold like the rest of them.

Mr Clark: No, I don't believe that. I don't believe that for a moment. I believe he will come through for us.

I don't know what's going to happen, but there are seven of them plus one who supported the drug treatments. Now the question becomes, will Mr McGuinty get to them? Will Mr McGuinty and Dominic the whip

actually whip them into line to oppose this bill? What we do see, ladies and gentleman at home, is the absenting. I challenge him not to absent himself from the vote. He should be here and vote in favour of this because it makes sense.

At the end of the day, what you end up having here is that I know we have seven members, maybe more, on the Liberal benches who agree that as to private-public partnerships, all governments should have the opportunity to explore that. We agree you should have the opportunity to explore. The issue of safety we can deal with through standards and regulations. It's being done right now, my goodness, to the member shaking "no" over there. The airport in Hamilton-Wentworth does it. It's all set in place. It's in force. So if there are private-public partnerships and they believe in drug treatment, I think I'm going to get my Christmas present. I think the member from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot will vote with the government. This will be the test. We shall see.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): Well, let's just get right to it and tell the member for Stoney Creek he's got a sock full of coal coming because it's not going to be the present he's going to expect to have. That's for sure. Unlike the member for Stoney Creek, my intention is to talk about the bill, and the bill says very clearly that in all 39 sections mentioned in Bill 144, nine are used to change the name of the Ontario parole board to the Ontario Parole and Earned Release Board. A whopping nine pieces of that legislation are used just to change the name.

Then we have five or so sections based on drug testing and drug treatment programs. Guess what the rest of the 27 different clauses are all about? Privatization. Why? Because they needed to change all the acts in the public domain to allow it to become privatized. Unlike the member from Stoney Creek, I've done my homework and found out that the success stories he wants to start talking about in the public-private arrangements are nothing but abysmal failures.

I have here a memo written to me by a member who has been involved in corrections for 24 years of his working life. He wants to tell us, "There is also a concern to the host community that a private jail will drain economic activity away from their communities as corporate profits rather than keeping those Ontario tax dollars working for them in their communities in the form of solid, full-time jobs for Ontarians," and that will be drained.

Let me be specific. We're going to talk about \$3.2 million leaving the town of Penetanguishene, from the member for Simcoe North's riding—\$3.2 million in profit drained directly out of that community, out of the province of Ontario and into the private company that decides to bid on this.

Let's talk about the safety that the member for Stoney Creek wanted to remind us about. We have got example after example that we try to explain very clearly, that we

are not just talking about privatization and a public-private partnership, that we're talking about standards that were established around the world, standards that each of these countries, each of these states and each of these jurisdictions established when they wrote the contracts for the private corporations. Guess what? They broke them. They broke every one of them.

Scotland: £160 million more than previously claimed. They were running it at £290 million over 25 years instead of the £130 million agreed to in the contract. Talk about taking the state for a ride by the private sector. Scotland's also having other problems, including the covering up of actual staffing levels when they had an agreement in place, the strong standards the members want to talk about, how the province of Ontario will not have any problems because it's going to write the rules. In every single state, every single country, every single jurisdiction that has had agreements in place, they were broken.

I say to the member from Stoney Creek: get your head out of the sand and wake up to the reality. This is the reality of the day, and you don't want to admit it. Those contracts were all broken. No matter what standards you say Ontario can have, the private corporations broke the standards that were established by those jurisdictions.

Let's talk about private jails already existing. The minister wanted to say to all of us, "Hey, we've already got a private-public success story. It's called Camp Turnaround." Big success story. They cherry-picked every one of the people they put into the institution. They couldn't have any mental disabilities. They couldn't have any record of violence toward anybody. They couldn't have all these kinds of things that were established before they even let them in the camp. Guess what? Their claim for recidivism was that it improved. It actually didn't even improve compared to the other institutions that were run as public institutions. So there's a fallacy unloaded.

We have a solution that was provided to the minister, and this group has yet to receive official approval or even a nod that they're really looking into it. They've got a letter in their hand that simply says, "Thanks for the input. We'll look into it for you." It's called the Alternate Solution, and in the Alternate Solution, this was offered to them. From a member from my riding, he and another expert—over 50 years of experience in the corrections field—offered the solution away from privatization. They offered recidivism reduction.

What did they do? They went through from 1994 on. They also showed that for Burtch Correctional Centre, which is destined to close because of the privatization of the mega-jail in Penetanguishene, they have offered a solution to keep the place open and running, at what per diem? Sixty-four dollars per diem, when the province's own mega-jail can't even come close to that—\$30 off. Yet the solution has not been given its just deserts.

This goes on and on. We've got more examples. Monitoring boards, drug testing—we had the member from Stoney Creek doing a flip and a flop. First, he was talking about drug testing, then he was talking about drug

treatment. We don't know exactly what the plan is over there. We have the drug treatment and the drug testing being referred to on a regular basis. We've been giving the minister, since the very beginning of this debate, examples of all the types of technology that are out there. He has said to us, on occasion, "We're going to take a look at it. We're going to possibly invest, but it's awfully expensive, don't you know?"—the xenon sniffers or the X-ray machines that are offered and proposed.

We have one that's really more important to take a look at, but I want to make sure the public recognizes that this was done by this government. A speaker at a demonstration was trying to explain the problems the government is having. His name's Dave Walker. He's an operational manager for Maplehurst complex. Mr Walker was there with Dixie, the dog that is specially trained as an institutional dog, specially trained for correctional facilities. Walker and Dixie were familiar faces at Ontario jails for over 11 years before the Tory government came in, but they cut his work in 1996.

Mr Sampson's scheme to drug-test inmates will do little to cut down on drug smuggling in jails. From 1985 to 1996, 400 searches were conducted in Ontario jails. Correctional service dogs logged over 2,000 drug finds. They found over 250 weapons and caught six escapees. The cancellation of that program has put the health and safety of every single correctional officer in jeopardy.

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Can you imagine the fact that they had such an effective tool already in use for 11 years and they put a stop to it because they didn't know what they were doing in terms of managing our correctional system? What I've been saying since square one is that we have a great foundation that is—it was, at least, until this government came in—a pride and joy, modelled around the world, because the foundation and the framework of the correctional system was seen as a wonderful way to rehabilitate and provide correction at the same time.

And what did this government do? It threw in management that couldn't even manage their way out of a paper bag. The Tory government decided to utilize a free OPP dog to replace Walker and Dixie. They found out that this dog they've gone to is ineffective because it was not trained in corrections situations. They're failing because they're not aware of the unique conditions of the prison environment. We challenge the minister to do the right thing and reinstate the correctional service drug dogs. Then the minister can truthfully say he's fighting drugs in jails. Walker is fighting for the return of Dixie and himself to work. The complaint is still at the Labour Relations Board, for over three years now, waiting for some type of resolution by this minister to show that he's on top of things and can do a good job.

Do you want to know something else they've done? Here's something rather interesting that has just taken place. They got a memo from a privateer who's inside the prisons already, the canteen services people. They stopped smoking from happening so they couldn't make a wad of profit on the sale of cigarettes, so what did they

do? They went to the minister and said, "We need to make some money here, so you've got to expand our list in the canteen." Anybody in corrections knows—I even knew it after the little time I've had to educate myself in this area—that you don't expand the canteen area, because you make the job of the correctional officer twice as hard, three times as hard, by putting in more items to choose from. They've got seven different types of shampoo with seven different designs of bottles. They've got eight different types of soap now, with eight different types of boxes and different designs of soaps.

This might sound simplistic, but what it implies is that they don't know what they're doing. The correctional officers said to them very clearly, "Do not introduce these extra foreign objects. We can't get through the searches for drugs with the canteen material we have already." And they've added over 50 different items on top of it. Why? Because they wanted the canteen people to make a profit. If that isn't a perfect example of what we are going to be facing when the privateers take over our prisons, then I don't know what is.

What is the problem with this government understanding that you don't sit around and try to simply create the business so people can make a lot of money? Or do you want to have a correctional system that's based on what we've been trying to say all along, corrective measures to keep our cities and communities safe? The members on the other side just do not have a clue what corrections are all about anyway. The fact that they've allowed this canteen expansion to take place is an example of how mismanagement started from the very top.

I'll use this analogy: in the sport of hockey, in the NHL, any league, any division, when we start talking about the success rate, in particular professional hockey, you don't sit back and say you've got to fire the entire team. It's time for the coach to go. Well, we've gotten rid of one coach; it's time for the next coach to go, because he's just picking up where the other guy left off and hasn't made any changes. It's time for the coach to leave and management needs to take a good serious look at how we are going to motivate this team.

The reality is that the minister of this particular portfolio, before he had to step down, spent all his time complaining about the absentee rate. He said, "These correctional officers are taking way too much time off." He didn't find out whether or not it was stress-related, whether or not it was sickness. He simply walked in and said, "This is ridiculous. The averages are way too high here." Guess what I found out? I did a little bit more homework. We find out that before 1995—

Interjections.

Mr Levac: They don't like to hear that they haven't done their homework. Member for Simcoe North, you're going to get your lump of coal when it comes time in 2003.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Member for Simcoe North, come to order, please. Sorry for the interruption, member for Brant.

Mr Levac: Thank you very much, Speaker. It's rather sad that some people don't like to know that they haven't done their homework. I will complete my thoughts so the member for Simcoe North can do a little homework.

Before 1995, the average absence by a correctional officer was seven days. From 1995 to now it's gone up, and it has skyrocketed since this minister took over. It's now up to around 25 days. That's a management problem. That's not a correctional officers' problem; that's a management problem. When you bring in that much stress, when you bring in that much degradation to these correctional officers, who give day in and day out in this particular job—it's one of those circumstances in which they know it might be their last day because they could be killed on the job.

The fact is that they've done some silly things here and it needs to be pointed out. You don't add that many items to a canteen list without knowing they could be doing some dangerous things with those items coming in and out. Why do I know that? Because we've had a canteen person who was caught, fined and sentenced for smuggling drugs into a correctional facility. They did not know that you shouldn't be expanding the canteen program. Why did they do it? They did it because they wanted the canteen operator to make a profit. If that isn't an example of why this government is headed down the wrong path, I don't know what is. I'm trying to alert the public out there that the privatization issue is a failed experiment from around the world for over 10 years but that they still want to do it.

The member for Stoney Creek wants to tell us that because a private-public operation works in an airport, it's OK to do it in a correctional facility. The member from Fanshawe wants to tell us that no, we've got assurances from the Solicitor General that we're not going to privatize police. But we'll use Stoney Creek's example that we can go into a private partnership with police and firefighters. Let's talk about his logic. His logic is flawed.

Mr Clark: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I never said anything of the kind about privatizing police services.

The Speaker: That's not a point of order. The member for Brant, sorry for the interruption.

Mr Levac: The truth hurts and the pain is going to be more evident. The fact is, the logic that the member for Stoney Creek wanted to use was that privatized and public partnerships are fine, hunky-dory everywhere, so let's start doing them all over the place, let's just use the same logic.

The member for Stoney Creek loves to use the phrase "Chicken Little." Let's talk about the reality. The reality is very simple. The failed 10-year experiment in privatization is over. Let's quote the Bible of the Conservatives, *Business Week*: "Private Prisons Don't Work." The business magazine, *Business Week*, speaks for the Conservatives. It doesn't work. Let's get rid of this whole game.

We've only been given 40 minutes to talk about this because of the time allocation. This government should be ashamed of itself for its flaws. Admit you made a mistake. Step back from it and realize that there are some things you don't privatize, like police, like firefighting, like organ donation, like giving blood, like taking the freedom away from our citizens of Ontario.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I want to speak to a couple of things about this bill, a couple of things that concern me, but before I do that, I want to point out that to gain some knowledge about correctional institutions I have visited a couple. Frankly, I don't know how many members of the House have been inside a correctional institution for one reason or another, to at least find out what goes on.

Let me tell you this. I went to an institution for young offenders. This one had some 60 inmates who were in under minimal care and 10 young offenders who were in a lockdown just like any prison institution.

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I went with my federal member, and we had the opportunity to talk to the 10 young offenders who were in the secure lock-up area. I'm sad to say that not one of that 10 had had what I would call a normal life, lived in what you might call a normal family. Those of us who have children—families have their ups and downs and their disagreements, kids will be kids, those kinds of issues. But I came out of there feeling sorry, because those 10 didn't come from what you would call a normal household.

What I was most concerned about was, what are we going to do to help them, what are we going to do to rehabilitate them? Some would suggest that you simply lock the door and throw away the key. That's not the answer. They weren't in there for crimes they weren't going to be released on for the rest of their lives. So at some point in time they're going to be released into society.

My concern was, what are we going to do to rehabilitate them, to help them, so that when they come out into society they might be able to contribute to society and lead a good life? I'm concerned that privatization will have as its bottom line the dollar value and not the value of the character of these young people. That's one reason I am concerned and afraid of privatization.

This summer I visited the provincial jail in Windsor. If anybody wants to even remotely suggest that being in jail is any kind of leisurely, pleasant life, they've got the wrong idea. The real crime at the provincial jail in Windsor is the conditions the staff have to work in. This jail is in excess of 100 years old, it's crowded and it's all chopped up. The living conditions of the inmates are certainly not pleasant, and, as I said, the working conditions for the staff are not pleasant.

Here again I wonder what we're going to do to rehabilitate the people we put into this institution for up to two years. Frankly, when I was there, there was limited recreation and the inmates spent most of the day in an area outside their cells with a picnic table and a TV.

I don't know what the answer is. I don't think simply locking them up is the answer. Somewhere along the way we have to emphasize that rehabilitation is part of it. Again, I'm not so sure the objective of a privately run institution will be rehabilitation.

I don't think this bill is so much an argument about privatization as it is about public safety. When I talk about public safety, there are two issues. One is, how secure will the prisons be? My colleague from Brant has given examples where the rate of escapes from private prisons is higher than from publicly operated facilities. I have to take him at his word; he has the documentation to back that up. So public safety is a concern. How secure are these facilities?

Secondly, and I think as important, is public safety when the inmates are eventually released. On rare occasions do we keep anyone locked up for the rest of their natural life, so rehabilitation becomes the issue. How serious will privately operated prisons be? How much of the funding they receive from the government will they use to rehabilitate those prisoners?

I'm concerned about that. We can use all the regulations we want, we can make all the rules we feel are necessary, but the bottom line of these privately operated facilities is going to be, "Can we make a profit?" They're not going to be there if they can't make a profit. If profit's going to be the bottom line, I'm concerned about how much of that income, that daily stipend they get for an inmate, they are going to put toward rehabilitation. I just don't think the incentive is there.

It's even been suggested in some of the notes I have that the objective of a privately operated facility will be to keep it full. I mean, that's the way to maximize your profits, to get as much as you can: keep the beds full. Will a privately run prison operation attempt to rehabilitate and release as many people as it can, in other words, depopulate our prisons? I doubt that, but that should be one of the objectives. I don't see where there are any incentives to do that.

My colleague from Brant in fact has used examples of where the private operator has tried to maximize the profits even more. In other words, "How can I make more money out of this prison?" I think that's the real issue of public safety: what's going to happen when these prisoners are released?

Drug testing is one of the issues dealt with in this legislation. It introduces a drug-testing program for inmates, parolees, inmates on temporary absence and conditional sentence offenders. Yes, I think we have to do everything we can to keep drugs out of our prisons. I think we have to do everything we can to prevent any kind of stimulant, any kind of drug, entering our prisons. I don't know how they do it. Obviously they get into our institutions somehow. If testing inmates is one of the ways we can attack the problem, then that may be what we have to do. But when I say "attack the problem," the problem is, how then do we treat these inmates? How do we take them off their dependency on drugs? I don't know. I look to my colleague from Brant. Is there

anything in this legislation that would address that situation?

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): You can introduce a private bill.

Mr Crozier: I wouldn't mind introducing a private member's bill if I really thought it would have any kind of success, but oftentimes that isn't the case.

My point is, privately run institutions, I'm afraid, are going to be operated only because of the bottom line. If there aren't incentives to treat inmates because of their drug problem—in fact, many of them come into the institution with a drug problem. We don't have to test them. We probably know even before they come into the institution that they have a problem. But what are we going to do to rehabilitate them?

I don't mean that prisons have to be posh places in which to live. When we send someone to an institution, there should be certain degree of punishment. They've done something wrong and they should pay for it. But they should be able to pay for it with some dignity and they should be able to pay for it with some hope that when they come out, they will be an asset in society and that we haven't treated them in such a way that they're simply going to reoffend. That's what bothers me about privately run institutions.

Quite frankly, the record recently of this government has been to find somebody to blame when things go wrong. When they are privately run institutions, I'm afraid the government will find it too easy to blame someone else. When they are publicly run, when the government's accountable, when we have a minister who has to stand up and be accountable—that's what I think we need. When it comes to penal institutions, they should be run publicly.

2230

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's so rare that I actually get to comment on some of this important legislation. These remarks are actually made for the member from Peterborough, as well as the member from Simcoe North, who I know are interested in this issue.

For those who are viewing tonight and those who may be recording this, Bill 144 is An Act to establish accountability—I know the Liberals don't like that—in correctional services, to make offenders demonstrate that they are drug-free—that seems fairly reasonable to me—to set rules for offenders to earn their release, to give the Board of Parole a say in earned release decisions, and to change the name of the Board of Parole.

It's fairly simple. The member from Brant earlier, and the member from Essex more recently, provided a lot of criticism and very little constructive input. I'm here tonight—all of us are—to gather input.

The member from Essex suggested that programs to address drug and alcohol addiction—for instance, Alcoholics Anonymous—should indeed be available to institutions to help treat inmates' addictions. On the other side, clearly they don't want any accountability. It's like the HRDC decisions federally. There's no accountability. That's what disappoints me. For the people administering

our institutions today, who need the tools—I could just relax for a moment and say to the viewer tonight that to think that in our publicly funded institutions, to even accept for a moment that there's drugs and alcohol, is totally unacceptable. They're paying for it. The Liberals here tonight are clearly on record as saying that they're opposed to any of the accountability mentioned in Bill 144.

It should be clear that approximately 83% of adult inmates in correctional institutions are found to have some degree of drug and alcohol dependency. That's worth repeating—not just to use up time here, but that may be one of the reasons—83% of adult inmates in correctional institutions are found to have some degree of drug and alcohol dependency. In fact, it's probably the root of the situations they find themselves in. For a government to desert those people and to ignore those needs is absolutely—

Mr Clark: It would be unconscionable.

Mr O'Toole: As the member says, unconscionable. I, for one, want to stand up and say that there has to be a humanitarian kind of attitude toward this, not to enter this debate on Bill 144 assuming that people have abusive or addictive substance issues in the background. Clearly the information I have is that 83% of the inmates in correctional institutions are found to have some degree of drug use, that being clearly established as a fact. All of them here agree. I see them nodding. Well, there are very few here to nod; they're probably sleeping.

The presence of illegal substances in the institutions increases the danger—this is important too—and compromises the safety and security of staff and other inmates. It's like a plague situation. Once this happens to infiltrate an institution, it's incumbent upon the operation of that institution to take issue and challenge it. It's important to start at the very beginning, as in all things. For many people watching here, it might be an appropriate time to switch on your recorder, because I'm going to give you the definitive facts. These are the preamble statements on Bill 144.

“The name of the Board of Parole would be changed to the Ontario Parole and Earned Release Board. In circumstances prescribed by regulation”—which is important, sort of a red tape issue—“the board would be authorized to determine whether an inmate has earned remission of his or her”—I'm thinking of “her” right now—“sentence under the relevant federal or provincial legislation.

“The Lieutenant Governor in Council would be authorized to make regulations governing active participation in programs designed to promote rehabilitation”—that's probably the most important part of this whole thing, to define and determine if there's a need and then institute and promote rehabilitation and reintegration—“for the purpose of determining whether an inmate has met the requirements for earning remission of his or her sentence under the relevant federal or provincial legislation.”

As I stand here, the member from Guelph-Wellington finds this humorous, but I find it hard to think of members of the opposite sex involved in any of this stuff. The real question is, how naïve am I?

"In circumstances set out in the bill, inmates, parolees, inmates on temporary absence, probationers and conditional sentence offenders could be required to produce evidence of the absence of alcohol or other substances from their bodies by submitting to tests." That's not unreasonable. The Liberals here—the members from Wellington or Essex or Brant—would know that this is a very, very reasonable expectation. If someone is serving time for invading someone's home or for some other action that has invaded someone else's rights, it's not too much to ask. But the Liberals of course are soft on crime. We know that. It's been stated here, I would say, not just by the member from Brant but more specifically by the member from St Paul's, whose absence here is noticeable. I shouldn't say that, but I will. He would, I expect, stand in his place and take some issue with the fact that the Liberals clearly are soft on crime.

"The bill would clarify that contracts may be entered into with contractors that authorize or require the contractors to provide correctional services." There's no question that we want to provide some sort of competition or accountability so that we're providing the best service at the best price. Standards are a given. In fact, this introduces many standards: standards in testing, testing so there are no banned substances, whether alcohol or drugs, in our publicly funded facilities. I can't even imagine—how naïve I am—that there's a good possibility that there are banned substances in our publicly funded institutions. I'm going to have to pause for a moment because that's shocking to me.

"Related amendments deal, for example, with the relationship of contractors to the crown, powers to inspect premises operated by contractors, powers to issue directions to contractors, and powers to replace a director or superintendent of a correctional institution if a contractor does not adequately comply with directions." So the ministerial accountability is clearly here.

"The Minister of Correctional Services"—it used to be Rob Sampson, and I have every confidence that he will be returned, hopefully before Christmas—"would be authorized to appoint local monitoring boards for correctional institutions."

When I was going through Bill 144—it's not that large a bill. You can call my constituency office and get a copy, or you can get it on the Web site, www.gov.on.ca. It's there.

2240

I want to go to the section on substance testing. This seems to be substantively what much of the consternation has been about. For the record—I hope Hansard is ready—in subsection 57.9(1), "A person authorized by the minister for the purpose may demand that an inmate in a correctional institution produce evidence of the absence of alcohol or other prescribed substances from its or her body by submitting to a prescribed test to

determine the presence of alcohol or other prescribed substances in his or her body, if, (a) the demand is authorized by the director or superintendent of the correctional institution and the person authorized by the minister has"—but all of this is really to say, shouldn't a person who's incarcerated for home invasion or other kinds of infractions in society be subject to some sort of accountability? Is that too much to ask?

The Liberals clearly are on record as being opposed to all of this. It's unimaginable to me that we would allow—in fact, where you draw the line is where this bill really challenges the opposition. Any principles they may have with respect to—it sounds to me as if they think maybe just a little bit of drugs or a little bit of alcohol is OK.

It's not acceptable. It's that simple. Clearly, our current minister—I'm not sure if it's Rob Sampson; it's actually Norm Sterling, but I think it all came from the Honourable Rob Sampson, in his former life—get a life, actually—and he's still with us today. But it's challenging to me.

I'm going to read some of the subsections here. As I looked through the briefing notes that were provided for me—because I've just read Bill 144 and there are many sections which I'm not actually that familiar with, but the notes are very helpful—under the reform act an inmate is given half a day of remission for each full day served. This means inmates can have their sentence reduced by up to one third of the total. For example, an inmate serving a 90-day sentence could have his or her—there's that "her" thing again—sentence reduced by a maximum of 30 days, 15 days for each of the first two months served. So by conforming to the system, by relinquishing their self-empowerment and saying, "You know, I have committed an offence against society and I should be attempting to rehabilitate"—that's not too much to ask, in my mind—they can reduce their sentence. What we're trying to say is if there are absolute provisions for people to earn back or to be recognized for the time they've served repentantly—I don't want to say that too strongly—currently there are no means by which prison authorities can hold inmates who have earned remission in custody until the full completion of their sentence, except if they lose their earned remission through bad behaviour. There again, the bad behaviour would have to almost be defined, because in my view if someone is in prison using banned substances they certainly should not have earned back any sort of remission.

That's not being unreasonable. I think there are many persons, first-time and perhaps repeat minor offenders, who may have run into the wall and recognized that it's time they stopped this negative behaviour. Since the Ontario government cannot repeal—gee, this is the difficult part—the federal discount law, we should be making inmates actually earn any remission in their sentence, instead of handing them an automatic remission.

That's the whole point here, that automatically one third of your time is discounted. We're opposed to that.

In fact, I've heard the former Minister of Correctional Services from Mississauga Centre say it's Club Fed. It's true: the golf courses and tennis courts, it's unimaginable. Hard-working people of Ontario are paying for this. Earned remissions should be a privilege given to those who earn it, not a right. That's substantively the whole argument: it is not a right. They have offended society, they have been sentenced by a court and there should be some negative aspects to their incarceration, with all the respect that an incarcerated person deserves. I'm not sure what that is, but they can vote, they can apparently, in the federal prisons, play golf, take swimming lessons—Karla Homolka is a good example—get their degree, get a life. Can you imagine those families that have been ruined? It's a Liberal kind of policy. It comes down from Allan Rock or Anne McLellan, this intolerable acceptance of violence in society. This is just a small step of saying they shouldn't be able to use drugs and drink when they're in prison. What's wrong with this?

I can't believe that both the opposition and the third party—Mr Kormos, sitting there, knows exactly what I'm talking about. You think it's acceptable that they should be using banned substances while incarcerated? I'm weakened by this, actually, but I will recover.

Inmates not only have to behave themselves when in jail but they should also have to actively participate in programs—now, this is good—which address their criminal attitudes and behaviour. I'm all for this, the psychological warfare issue here, that they should have to participate in programs like corrective behaviour, positive attitude, all this stuff. The member for Kingston and the Islands is grinning when I say this. He knows what I mean. He lives in Kingston, and Kingston's got a lot of prisons and some of the inmates aren't inside. These should include things like work programs, education and training, doing work in institutions as well as treatment programs to address the fundamental cause of their negative behaviour to start with.

Mr Speaker, you know yourself, as everyone does here, you have to get to the root cause, the psychological disorder in their life, the lack of economic resources, the lack of training. We're saying here we provide those resources in our institutions and we would like the people to take advantage of them. I want to repeat that the fundamental thing in Bill 144 is they shouldn't be on drugs. It's very difficult to learn when you're on drugs. You've seen that commercial, "You're brain's fried on drugs." I agree with that.

Inmates should also have to behave appropriately when in the institutions, treat officers with respect. I've heard from, not specifically the former Minister of Correctional Services, Rob Sampson—

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): He's still with us.

Mr O'Toole: He's still with us—that some inmates have actually bitten, scratched and hurt, offended officers. I think they should be tested for other kinds of diseases. When you break someone's skin there could be hepatitis C and other kinds of things. I personally don't

think they should have a lot of rights in prison, other than being treated respectfully. I see the Speaker nodding. Perhaps he's nodding off.

Inmates should also have to behave appropriately when in institutions and to keep drug-free and alcohol-free and obey the rules and regulations of the prison. We expect that of ourselves in this House. Some may not abide by that but it's mostly on the other side. If they misbehave or refuse to participate in programs, they have not earned their remission and should not be let out early; they should serve their full sentence. I fully concur with that.

Interjections.

Mr O'Toole: Clearly, I hear from the Liberals—they're barracking now—they would let them out, you know, easy parole, and let them back into society to re-offend. Making prisoners earn their remissions would make them more accountable for their actions and their impact on society. I think if we actually had some respect in the prisons and incarcerations, people would earn self-respect for themselves.

We're not talking hard time here. We're not talking anything more than conforming to the rules, as everyone in society has to, including members of our caucus. Sometimes they have to conform to the rules, under some difficulty at times.

2250

Mr Clark: Sometimes.

Mr O'Toole: Sometimes under difficulty, as Brad is saying here.

Making prisoners earn their remissions would make them more accountable for their actions and their impact on society.

If I could digress for one moment here—and I seldom do this—

Mr Clark: This time the Speaker nodded.

Mr O'Toole: He's not just nodding, he's actually smiling, which is a sign that he's laughing with or at?

Some years ago I had my home invaded when I was living in Bowmanville. We were disturbed during the night. I heard a noise downstairs. At that time we had three or four young children so I thought it was one of the children up at night. I went downstairs and as soon as I got downstairs I noticed a shadow in the back part of the house. This is a true story. I hope Hansard is getting the full recording of this. No, I'm serious. I looked out and I thought perhaps it was my brother who had come in for some reason or other, my older brother Karl—for the record, because I'll probably send him a copy of Hansard on this. It's nice to get his name in the record. No, I'm serious. Honest to God, this is the truth. They came in as the moon was shining in the window. That's sort of poetic, isn't it? I realized it was someone I didn't recognize. I'm telling you, for a moment I was frozen with fear, but being me, I soon relinquished that and sort of got—

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington): You got your wife.

Mr O'Toole: I yelled out, "Peggy, help." No, no, that's not true, Brenda. Leave it alone.

I said, "I can handle this." I said, "What the heck are you doing here?" This person—and this is a fact. I would not on Hansard report this kind of information. Anyway, I said, "Look, if you don't get out of the house immediately, I'm going to call the police." But he was beside the phone, which was a problem. So I said, "I'm going to open the front door and you get the heck out of here." I said another word but on Hansard you can't say this kind of stuff. So I opened the door and I stood up on the stairs and he ran out. This is on the record. He ran out the front door. I shut the door quickly, went back, jumped on the phone and dialled 911. He was at the back window trying to get in, because 911 connected me to the police cruiser, and he was trying to get in the window. Now here's the whole story—I'm sorry to have departed but there's eight minutes left and I'll use them all.

The next week in the Bowmanville Statesman, the weekly paper, the headline was "O'Toole's Home Invaded." Do you know something? That person was an escaped convict—

Mr Clark: No.

Mr O'Toole: Yes—who tried to break into my home. When I got on 911, they were looking for him and he was trying to get back in the house. I'm telling you I felt threatened and I felt violated. There's no question. I understand on home invasions, however trivial we make these things—I felt violated and my home was violated. In fact, a couple of years later we moved. But as it turned out, this fellow was an escaped convict from John Gerretsen's riding, Kingston. He was. John was the mayor of Kingston at the time, I think. I'm not sure he had anything to do with his escape, nor would I impute those motives, but nonetheless, John wasn't up to the job then and he's not up to the job now.

The point I was trying to make is that when they're incarcerated, not only are they released early, but perhaps there's not enough rehabilitation going on in the institutions. I think making prisoners earn their remission would make them more accountable for their actions and their impact on society.

That little segue helps people understand that I'm quite genuine when I say I would not like to invade individuals' rights, but I think with individuals' rights also come individuals' responsibilities. We are all members of a collective society, and because they're incarcerated they should also have to relinquish the right to use any banned substances. There's nothing in Bill 144—and the members opposite will try to criticize it. In fact, I can account that they will probably, as on all things, vote against it, because they are definitely soft on crime. This government is trying to provide the tools for those institutions to do the right thing.

With that small, impassioned plea, I ask for your support, I ask for your understanding on Bill 144, which was introduced by the Honourable Rob Sampson on November 20. I think he should be the minister when it is proclaimed to be law in this province of Ontario. With

that, I am saving some of my time for the member from—actually, he's from not far from here. He's from Simcoe North.

The Speaker: Further debate? The member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr Gerretsen: I guess the people who want to hear from the member for Simcoe North may have to wait another hour or so before they actually have that opportunity.

In the 13 minutes I have left, I just want to touch on a number of brief points, first of all the point that the last speaker raised. Let me say that anyone who gets broken into and has a crime committed in their home feels violated. Certainly it's a very traumatic experience for the individual and for their family. It happened to me on three separate occasions in our house back in the 1980s and it's something that affected our family for a long time. I don't make light of that. But to somehow suggest that this bill has anything to do with that is absolute and total nonsense.

Let's just take a look at what the Provincial Auditor has said about the kind of criminals who are kept in our provincial institutions. One has to remember that we're talking about people who have been sentenced to two years less a day. These are not violent offenders. Let me just read to you what the Provincial Auditor stated on page 84 in his latest report, which was released just a couple of weeks ago: "The majority of inmates were admitted to Ontario's institutions for property and other offences not related to crimes of violence." So the government can fearmonger all it wants about being tough on crime; the fact of the matter is that the provincial institutions that this government is responsible for deal with individuals who are not violent, because they've been sentenced to two years less a day. The auditor goes on to say, "Our examination revealed that Ontario's success rate with the temporary absence program over the eight years remained unchanged at about 97%." In other words, 97% of all the people who have been given temporary absences do return.

Temporary absences are necessary. If you want to reintegrate somebody successfully back into the mainstream of life, you cannot put them in jail, throw away the key and hope that when they come out two years later they will somehow adhere to society's rules and regulations. That person has to be given rehabilitation, has to be given a temporary absence program to manoeuvre their way back into life, so that they will not reoffend. That surely is the goal we all want. We don't want people to reoffend. Number one, it's a lot cheaper for society if they don't reoffend, because even in our provincial institutions it costs \$95,000 to keep an inmate there on an annual basis, and number two, it's better for the individual, because hopefully when they come out and become responsible citizens they'll become taxpayers and contributors to society, and that's surely what we want for everybody. But the only way you're going to do it is to make sure that the proper programs are in place so that it will happen to the inmates.

2300

I'm again referring to the Provincial Auditor, who is an independent individual responsible to this Legislative Assembly. He's not hired by the opposition and he's not hired by the government. He's an independent officer. What does he say? He states, "Ministry staff indicated there was not one case of an offender reported to have committed a serious crime while on temporary absence." Not one case. That's the conclusion the Provincial Auditor came to in his report.

Having said that, let's also look at his overall audit conclusions on the Ministry of Correctional Services. I bring this up because I'm becoming more and more convinced that the government wants to run down this program and the programs that are run in the institutions to such a degree that the general public will simply say, "OK, we give up. Maybe you better privatize." I happen to believe it is absolutely essential that certain services remain within the public domain from a safety viewpoint, if no other viewpoint. Through its criminal laws and its other laws that have been violated by offenders, society has the right to make sure that those offenders do not reoffend and that they be incarcerated for the period of time they're sentenced to. Not only do we have the right, we have that responsibility to the offenders and also to the rest of society.

I don't think that's the kind of function you should privatize, and I will get to that in a moment, because so far your privatization efforts have been a total failure. I know the member from Simcoe North loves to talk about Camp Turnaround, but let me quote to you what the Provincial Auditor said about Project Turnaround, which has been privatized. He states that the three-year contract was an \$8.3-million contract.

"Our review of the contract and payments made to the contractor showed that an additional \$400,000 was paid to the contractor beyond the contract price for security custody services. Ministry officials informed us that the amount was for additional staffing not anticipated in the original contract." What does the auditor say? "Our examination of the contract did not reveal any provision for payments beyond the contract price."

If that's the way you want to privatize, by paying to a contractor \$400,000 more than he was entitled to, as the auditor quite clearly points out—I advise anybody who wants to have a copy of this to contact my office or the ministry office and we will send you copies of pages 82 and 83 of this report—no wonder the private contractors are lining up. They're getting paid \$400,000 more than they should be getting, according to the auditor.

It doesn't end there. He goes on to say, "The ministry was not verifying invoiced amounts against the contract. It had been overpaying the contractor"—listen to this—"by \$24,000 per year for after-care services until we brought the overpayment to its attention." Twenty-four thousand dollars per year was paid to this private contractor and it took the auditor to tell the ministry, "You shouldn't be paying this."

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Why were they paying it?

Mr Gerretsen: They were paying it for no reason whatsoever. They shouldn't have been paying it. That's the whole purpose of the thing. The auditor goes on and on. Let me tell you a couple of other things which are kind of interesting.

I happen to believe the correctional officers who work for us are decent individuals who want to do a day's work for a day's pay. These are people who are, by and large, well trained to do the kind of work they're doing. I happen to come from a community where we have seven federal institutions. I can tell you that the over 3,000 correctional officers who work in the federal system and who live in my riding of Kingston and the Islands are individuals any community can be extremely proud of. They do a good job for their community and also for the institutions they serve. The only thing I can see that could possibly upset this whole situation is if we were to privatize these sectors.

That's why I ask the minister—whoever is in charge. We don't even know which minister's in charge any more. One minister introduces the bill and he has to resign. Another minister isn't here on third reading. There's no parliamentary assistant. There are no questions to be answered by anybody. It's an awful and dreadful situation, Speaker.

I get the impression that maybe the government knows it's doing an extremely bad job. Here, for example, is another quote that's kind of interesting in the auditor's report. It says that "27% of the correctional program recommendations for meeting the needs of inmates were not met as the recommended programs were not available." The programs simply weren't available. And "60% of superintendents indicated that the existing training required of correctional officers was not adequate to meet the operational needs of their institutions."

I say to the minister, shame on you. Sixty per cent of the people who work for you weren't properly trained, according to the Provincial Auditor. You have allowed the system to almost self-destruct, and the only reason it hasn't is that we've got good people working there. Rather than spending the extra \$400,000 and giving it to private contractors when they're not entitled to the money, or the \$24,000 per year as you did with Camp Turnaround on a yearly basis, why don't you spend that money on some good training programs, so that when the officers come to work for the correctional institutions, they will be properly trained and with the proper kind of programming that they can then deliver to the inmates?

With the proper kind of rehabilitation programs we will meet the ultimate goal, the ultimate goal being the fact that these people will not reoffend. I say to the minister, to whoever is in charge, you're going exactly in the wrong direction.

I heard some comments earlier tonight from the member from Stoney Creek who tried to suggest that if you are in favour of certain public-private partnerships, therefore you've got to be in favour of every public-

private partnership. He talked about airports. I can well see a partnership for airports. That wouldn't bother me for a moment. What would bother me is if the air traffic control officers were privatized. That's what would bother me.

Mr Sampson: That's what you guys did federally.

Mr Gerretsen: That's what would bother me.

Interjections.

Mr Gerretsen: Here they talk again about the federal institutions. I suggest all of these members ran in the wrong election. They should have run in the last federal election we held about a month or so ago, and we all know where they'd be tonight.

Interjection.

Mr Gerretsen: They certainly would be retired.

The point is that we, as a society, have an obligation to protect each one of our citizens. We have to make sure that those people who violate the rules of society, as set out in the Criminal Code and various other acts, are dealt with in a fair and consistent fashion. We want to make sure the people who deal with these people have the programs available to them so that these offenders will not reoffend, that they will serve their time and will get the proper kind of rehabilitation so that they will not reoffend. That's where the emphasis ought to be, rather than on this whole notion of privatizing a system that shouldn't be privatized in the first place.

I hear the members opposite laughing. They talk tough on crime, but when you get right down to it, the kinds of bills we've been dealing with in this House, such as the squeegee bill and various other things, all kind of look cosmetically as if something is happening in fighting crime, but in fact there's nothing happening at all.

Let me finish off by reading from a debate that was held just recently on private prisons. It states that there is "no convincing evidence to date that privately run prisons are any cheaper than public ones." As a matter of fact, if you let this government privatize our system, it's going to cost us more money, as the auditor has already found out.

The state should be ultimately responsible for administering the penal system in any society. So I say to you, Minister, because you probably will be a minister again, take this bill back and bring back a reasonable bill dealing with rehabilitation to make sure that offenders do not reoffend.

2310

Mr Kormos: It's 11:10 on Monday night.

Mr Sampson: Can you tell the time now?

Mr Kormos: I'm working on it.

I want to tell you, yesterday I was at the Apostolic Lighthouse Pentecostal Church, over on Ontario Road in Welland; Pastor Grant and that community. I first joined with those people when they were using the old movie theatre downtown as their church hall. What they have done—it's a very small congregation—is bought the old Polish hall on Ontario Road and converted it into their sanctuary. It's a very small congregation, still growing. Pastor Grant is a bright, young preacher who is clearly

acquiring a following. I was most impressed with the kids putting on their Christmas pageant, Speaker. It was a most impressive midday event. I simply wanted to let you know that was one of the things we did on Sunday down there. I'm grateful to the Apostolic Lighthouse Pentecostal Church, to Pastor Grant, to that congregation, and I wish them the very best.

But I was driving up here this morning on the QEW and I'm being made aware of a press conference that apparently the new Minister of Correctional Services is holding. I'm doing the best I can, but there's simply no way I'm going to get here by 10:30.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): You weren't speeding at all.

Mr Kormos: No, I had the little Chevy S-10, high-mileage as it is. Thank goodness for the folks in the back room at David Chev-Olds, because those folks, the mechanics there—unionized mechanics—keep that old truck running, travelling back and forth on the QEW.

But I was keeping abreast of what had happened in the minister of corrections' press conference. I was shocked and appalled, and I questioned Ms Stiles, one of our researchers, questioned her repeatedly, "Are you sure that that's how it went down this morning?" She assured me the minister of corrections displayed no noblesse oblige whatsoever, made no reference to his predecessor's work on the bill that he, the new minister of corrections, was introducing. I asked Ms Stiles several times if she was certain. I said, "Surely he acknowledged the work Mr Sampson put into the legislation." I asked Ms Stiles, "Are you certain?" The Minister of Correctional Services has been a member here much longer than I have. He's one of the more senior members of this Parliament. I thought, "How could a person with that much experience here be so crass as to not even salute his predecessor, Mr Sampson, and acknowledge the work that Mr Sampson had put into the bill, the Victim Empowerment Act?"

I was shocked when I was assured that, no, the Minister of Correctional Services did not see fit to acknowledge the work that Mr Sampson clearly had put into that bill that the new Minister of Correctional Services announced in his press conference this morning and then presented for first reading. So I was anxious for a ministerial statement this afternoon. I was reflecting on what I was going to say, having been briefed by our caucus staff person. I was going to admonish—I was going to ask the minister of corrections, would it have killed him to have said, "Thank you very much, Mr Sampson, for the work you've done"? Would it have been that painful to have shown Mr Sampson the courtesy of thanking him for the work that clearly he had done in preparing the Victim Empowerment Act, I'm sure very much the same level of work that the former Minister of Correctional Services put into the preparation of Bill 144?

I wanted to chastise the Minister of Correctional Services, if I had had that chance during responses to ministerial statements. I didn't have a chance, because of course he didn't make a ministerial statement, so I'm

doing it now. I thought that was very rude of the Minister of Correctional Services to not have thanked Mr Sampson for his work on this Victim Empowerment Act and his work on Bill 144.

But then I realized that in very short order—trust me—the new Minister of Correctional Services will be blaming it all on Mr Sampson. I watched the Minister of Correctional Services outside the chamber after the bill had been presented for first reading. It didn't take long to read it, because the Victim Empowerment Act, as it was billed—well, the bill doesn't live up to the billing. It didn't take long for the press to understand that there are no victims' rights contained in the Victim Empowerment Act introduced for first reading earlier today. There are no rights contained in it.

It doesn't entrench the right of a victim to appear at, never mind participate in, the parole hearing of the criminal who imposed the crime. It doesn't entrench any right for that victim to attend or participate in the parole hearing of that criminal. In fact, all it does is say that the government has the power to, by regulation, determine which victims, if any, will be able to attend parole hearings of the criminal who victimized them. The government will also, by regulation—which means behind closed doors, in secret, without debate, without public consultation—decide the extent to which that victim, if she or he is allowed to be at that parole hearing, can be involved in the parole process.

It was one of the most dramatic failures of this government to live up to its billing—self-billed, self-proclaimed—as champions of victims when it became so quickly apparent that there were no rights contained in this bill once again. This government's now got a pretty hefty legacy of failed commitments to victims of crime. This government has a pretty hefty legacy of a failed agenda when it comes to making communities safer.

Once again, we've got a bill presented to us today which very much follows on the heels of Bill 144. Bill 144 is going to be notable, obviously, as the bill for which a good friend of Mr Sampson's, the member for Northumberland—

Mr Sampson: Still a friend.

Mr Kormos: Yes, the member for Northumberland, a good friend of Mr Sampson's, a person to whom Mr Sampson I suspect feels many obligations, a sense of indebtedness perhaps. Perhaps Mr Sampson possesses that primitive sense of retribution with respect to Mr Galt. I don't know. But Bill 144 is going to be remembered most for that unpleasant incident—was it just a week ago?—which has resulted now in a police investigation and in two resignations, one by a parliamentary assistant and one by a minister.

2320

Although Bill 144 was played up as more of the Tories getting tough on crime and more of the Tory agenda of protecting victims of crime and ensuring that corrections worked—the billing was huge, big neon letters—the pathetic reality of Bill 144 is that it's just another little building block on the way to complete privatization of

our correctional system in Ontario. Although from time to time I've liked the previous minister, as a person I suppose, it remains clear that just as his thumbprint is all over Bill 144, it is similarly all over the Victim Empowerment Act today, to which the present Minister of Correctional Services declined to acknowledge Mr Sampson's contribution.

These are frankly crap bills. They're phony-baloney bills. They're bills that have fancy, attractive titles but at the same time are very deceitful. They're bills that fail to live up to any promise. In fact, they not only don't live up to the promise, but they break the commitment, they break the promise. Promise made, promise broken.

Here we are in the year 2000 with fewer police per capita than we had in 1994 when we were still recovering from that deep recession when revenues in this province plummeted through the basement. Here we are in the year 2000, when the government says it cares about safer communities, and we've got fewer police officers per capita today than we did six years ago. I don't find that level of staffing, when it comes to police officers, by a government that is enjoying revenues that haven't been seen in a long time in Ontario—I don't find that lack of resourcing and lack of staffing of our police services boards across this province to be indicative of any real commitment to safer communities. I find it a complete failure, along with this government's complete failure in the area of victims' rights.

Remember what Judge Day said about your Victims' Bill of Rights? Judge Day made it clear that your Victims' Bill of Rights—and opposition members were telling you this on a regular basis throughout the debate around that so-called Victims' Bill of Rights. The courts finally told you that your Victims' Bill of Rights contains no rights for victims, that there are no rights in this province for victims of crime.

All the fanfare around the victims' rights office and all the bills like Bill 144 or the Victim Empowerment Act—what a sad title for that bill. Look, two weeks ago the Attorney General put on his Eliot Ness double-breasted suit and fedora. He's out there, he's going to take on, he's going to be like the G-men on TV. The Attorney General is going to be like Eliot Ness. He's going to be busting up the Mob and seizing their assets.

At the same time, we saw a bill come forward that has dubious sustainability in terms of its exposure to serious charter arguments and also a bill that would require levels of resources for crown attorneys, courts, investigators and police that this government simply isn't prepared to provide. The fact is that this government has made so little contribution to the existing federally permitted procedures to seize proceeds of crime that it becomes pretty obvious it has no interest in really providing the resources to make the bill work, if indeed the bill is workable.

But that wasn't the end of it. Two weeks ago the Attorney General was Eliot Ness. Last week, in the silliest press conference of all—it really was silly; it was

a silly press conference—the Attorney General introduced a law that had already been passed in 1994.

Does this guy not read the Revised Statutes of Ontario? I've read his CV, I've read somewhere that he's a lawyer. He was in the Supreme Court of Canada where he, as the Attorney General, distinguished himself. You'll recall the press reports about that. The Attorney General of Ontario distinguished himself in the Supreme Court of Canada. He really distinguished himself.

Well he did, Mr DeFaria. You're smiling, and you as a lawyer understand exactly what I'm saying. He embarrassed himself in the Supreme Court of Canada. Yes, hide your face in shame. I agree.

Mr DeFaria, it's nice to see you are prepared to stand up and be counted when you've got to call it the way it is. The Attorney General of Ontario bungled his appearance in the Supreme Court of Canada. He did. He blew it, big time. He "distinguished" himself.

Two weeks ago: Eliot Ness. Last week the Attorney General, in part of this law-and-order agenda, announced he was going to introduce a law that was passed six years ago, the proceeds of crime bill that was passed in 1994. It was Cam Jackson's private member's bill that was adopted by the government of the day, which made it illegal for a criminal to profit from the sale of books or movie rights, all those sorts of things, relating their crimes and further exploiting their crimes.

But last week the Attorney General was announcing and tabling for first reading legislation that was passed six years ago. I don't understand that. I find that very peculiar. It's strange. It's a little wacko. It betrays somebody who hasn't spent a lot of time doing some basic legal research. I appreciate that the Attorney General wasn't a member of this Legislature in 1994. But good grief, one of his own caucus mates was the author of the private member's bill that became law. Doesn't the Attorney General talk to his caucus mates?

I'm saying to the backbenchers here, clearly you engage in socialization with ; we've seen some of that this evening.

Interjection: You'll get me in trouble.

Mr Kormos: Well, comradeship with each other.

Interjection: That's better.

Mr Kormos: Surely you spend that kind of quality time with your Attorney General. I presume you have quality time with your Attorney General where you sit around and the Attorney General says, "I was thinking of doing this. What do you guys think?" Maybe when you are sitting down with him—just the guys and gals, jackets off, shirt sleeves rolled up and somebody's been mixing the Freshie—the Attorney General says, "Look, I've got this idea. I think I'm going to pass a law that'll make it illegal for criminals to profit from their crimes."

Then somebody like Cam Jackson could have said, "Mr Attorney General, we've already got that law. I had a private member's bill in 1994 that the government of the day passed." Then the Premier—why do I keep calling the Attorney General the Premier? Does the Attorney General have ambitions? I think it's possible.

He looks like somebody on the campaign trail to me, and I'm not talking about just working his riding. I think somebody over there has their vision set on something a little further than just tomorrow or New Year's Eve. I suspect—how could I know with certainty? Of course I couldn't.

If you had that kind of quality time with your Attorney General you could have told him, "Attorney General, don't embarrass yourself by announcing you are going to introduce a bill that is already law." Then he wouldn't have looked silly as he looked last week, and the press wouldn't have been all over him like a cheap suit with questions that left him stunned and eager. You know, you've got the little helpers, the ones who say, "The interview is over," the ones who grab you by the arm and you're out of that scrum. That little minion last week was doing an awful lot of tugging. "Attorney General, this interview is over, trust me. Honest, it's over. Guys, shut the cameras off. Interview's over."

2330

The real issue last week was that pressure was being put on the Attorney General and the Premier about the prospect of some Hollywood-type film being made with Hollywood-type actors here in Toronto about two of the most despicable criminals this province has ever suffered—Bernardo and Homolka. Hampton and the New Democrats are saying, "Look, please, Premier, Attorney General, stop this thing. Tell us you're not going to let any film-maker use any government property. Just tell these film-makers they're not going to have access to province of Ontario government buildings to make this film." After a few days in question period, it was suggested, "Oh, Mr Hampton, we've done that."

Then Hampton said, "Will you then please let us, on unanimous consent, amend the budget, still before the House, so that we can ensure that no money from the Ontario Film Development Corp, taxpayers' money, goes to finance or support the financing of this kind of film?" All of a sudden the Attorney General and the Premier didn't want to do that. They left the distinct impression, the Premier and the Attorney General, that if Ontario taxpayers subsidize some Hollywood movie to make millions of bucks for producers and film companies starring Hollywood kind of actors, that was OK with the Premier of Ontario and the Attorney General.

The Attorney General introduces a bill that's already law, because the law is already clear in Ontario that criminals can't profit from their crime. But then the Attorney General refuses to stand up and be counted and tell those film-makers who want to make a film about Bernardo and Homolka that if they want to do it, they'd better do it somewhere other than Ontario, that they're not welcome in Ontario because Ontarians and the government of this province aren't going to tolerate that sort of pornographic production.

They could have said that, but they didn't. So they've got to make a little distraction, a little diversionary tactic, David Copperfield with legerdemain. Get people looking up there while you're doing something over here.

As I say, two weeks ago it was Eliot Ness taking on organized crime. Last week it was the Attorney General introducing a bill that had already been passed as law six years ago. That was a tough one. Very clever, Attorney General; nice trick. Slick, Jack. That was really slick. "I'm going to introduce a bill. It was law already? What the heck; I'll introduce it anyway. Come on, guys, give me the press conference, because I might be running for leader of the party."

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: It's either going to be—the Attorney General, like most of his colleagues, risked his fortunes with the Alliance in the last federal election. It didn't work out well, did it? Yikes. Ouch.

This week we have the Victim Empowerment Act, a little complementary legislation to Bill 144. In this one we have good grooming for prisoners. The Minister of Correctional Services has no idea what that's going to mean. We want better-groomed prisoners; we want prisoners who, I don't know, use talcum after they shower. I don't know what he has in mind. He doesn't know what he's got in mind. Better-groomed prisoners, for Pete's sake.

Interjection: The Charlie Manson bill.

Mr Kormos: Yes. The Tories here operate on the presumption that if Charlie Manson had but a decent shave and haircut, his character would have been entirely different. Just fix the guy up a little bit, get some gel into the hair, and he's not going to be a mass murderer. That's nuts. That's naïve. It's silly. That was the level of intellect in the good grooming bill introduced earlier today. It's silliness, and quite frankly, it's dishonest.

Interjections.

Mr Kormos: Speaker, listen carefully, because the people of Ontario are tired of being lied to. The people of Ontario are tired of deceit. They are.

The Speaker: I may have missed that, but I'm sure if the member did say something, he would withdraw it.

Mr Kormos: Speaker, I said the people of Ontario are tired of being lied to, because nobody likes being lied to, do we, Speaker? Nobody likes being lied to.

The Speaker: Just so I'm clear—I missed the beginning part of it. If you're referring to the government saying that, then you're going to have to withdraw that, I'm afraid.

Mr Kormos: I didn't speak the government's name in the context of that observation, but I'll withdraw.

But I've got to tell you, Speaker, nobody likes being lied around the block. Down where I come from, in Welland and Thorold and Pelham and south St Catharines, I've got folks who make it quite clear to me that the one thing that really gets them most is when they're lied to. That just drives them right up the wall. They expect, in this kind of community, some levels of civility that don't include being lied to, because nobody likes liars. We should deplore dishonesty. We should deplore deceit. We should deplore legislation that's hailed and billed as being good, tough law-and-order

legislation but ends up pulling the rug out from underneath victims.

We should deplore a government that had its pathetic performance in the Victims' Bill of Rights exposed by the courts of this province. Mr DeFaria, you read that judgment, didn't you, the judgment of Judge Day? You read it. You know what it says. As a lawyer, Mr DeFaria, you know what it says. You know what Judge Day said about the Victims' Bill of Rights, and you care. You deal with judges and you deal with victims. From time to time, you deal with offenders. But you know what Judge Day said about the Ontario Victims' Bill of Rights. Judge Day said that there are no rights.

2340

Mr Baird, what did Mr Harris promise in response to that judgment? Mr Harris promised that that's OK, he'd fix the Victims' Bill of Rights. Is that not right, Mr Baird, that he'd fix the Victims' Bill of Rights? Mr Baird, come back.

The Premier of Ontario said that he would fix the Victims' Bill of Rights. Mr DeFaria, you might not have been in the room a couple of minutes ago. That's OK, because you're a busy person. You've got things to do. You've got phone calls to make. But I was talking to some of your caucus colleagues—Mr Baird, move over. I'm talking to Mr DeFaria.

I was talking to some of your caucus colleagues about how you've got to have quality time with your cabinet ministers. I was explaining—were you here when I was explaining, Mr DeFaria—how some of you had had a chance to sit down with the Attorney General, jackets off, sleeves rolled up, and he had said, "Look, I've got this idea to write a bill that would prevent criminals from profiting from their crimes." You, Mr DeFaria, would have told him, "Don't be stupid, Attorney General. We already have that legislation." You're a lawyer. You knew we had that on the books. We've had it since 1994. You would have said, "Attorney General, don't be stupid. What's the matter with you? Read the books."

Mr DeFaria could have sat the Attorney General down, taken him to the RSOs, the statutes of Ontario, 1994, and said, "Look, Mr Attorney General"—don't you have a little bit of an ethical obligation to the Attorney General as a lawyer, Mr DeFaria, to protect him from embarrassing himself? You could have helped the Attorney General. You could have sat him down for just a little bit of quality time. You could have sat him down and said, "Look, if you go in front of a press conference and talk about this legislation, they're going to say, 'Wasn't that bill already passed?'" Right, Mr DeFaria? Think about it, Speaker; think about it.

Interjection: You can't mention a member's name.

Mr Kormos: I figured I was ready to get point-of-ordered on, "You can't talk to members directly; you've got to direct comments through the Speaker." That was a good one. Boy, do you think the brain trust over here will come up with more really tough ones before the night's over? Do you think they've all got their little thinking caps on? They're going to throw some real zingers out.

“Point of order, Speaker: Make Kormos address the Speaker.” For Pete’s sake. Is that the best you guys could do? Jeez.

You’ve heard some reference to the report of the Provincial Auditor. This crew over here have been condemned more thoroughly than any of the three governments in my short time here that I’ve been through. This government has been condemned more thoroughly. This government has been exposed as being incapable of running the store. Look at it: indictment after indictment. You’ve read the report, Mr DeFaria, haven’t you? You bet your boots you have. Did anybody ask your advice? Did they ask? Had they, I’m sure you would have been helpful. You would have been prepared to sit down and say—Mr DeFaria, don’t go. You can come and sit over here, if you’d like.

You know what the auditor said about this government’s pathetic management, the creation of that Snobeleneque crisis in corrections? What was it, \$24,000 a year, \$2,000 a month? Talk about crime and the proceeds of crime. Camp Turnaround was picking the taxpayers’ pocket, with you as co-conspirators, to the tune of 24 grand a year. You kept writing the cheques. It wasn’t money they earned; it was theft from the taxpayers, and you guys are driving the getaway car.

Yes, \$400,000 paid to the contractor beyond the contract price for security custody services, just shy of half a million bucks that you pay to your buddy private sector partners. Just because they’re friends? Are you just happy to see them and you cut the cheque? Is it that easy? Is that what it amounts to, that you simply submit the invoices to this government? Whether it’s almost half a million dollars over a contract price agreed upon, you just cut the cheque: “Here’s 400 grand, guys.” Or, in the case of Camp Turnaround—and we know about Camp Turnaround—two grand a month overpayment, month after month after month after month. This wasn’t one incident of inadvertence. This was month after month after month. The cook-chill was millions and millions of dollars over estimated cost, Mr Sampson, and it still doesn’t have the capacity to feed the inmates contained in what are soon to be private institutions. You see, what Bill 144 is all about is the privatization of our prisons. Mr Sampson was prepared to hand them over. He didn’t even make them accept any of the risks. He made sure that the taxpayer of Ontario stayed on the hook for the construction of the mega-jails in Penetang, in Lindsay and down in Milton. The taxpayer pays, the private sector profits. A pretty nice relationship—pretty cosy, Mr Sampson.

And you purport to worry about the victims of this province, when you victimize taxpayers with your mismanagement of corrections in the province of Ontario, when you and your government have been parties to a rip-off of taxpayers that drew the thorough ire of the Provincial Auditor, that left the auditor just shaking his head.

Mr Sampson: It’s quarter to 12.

Mr Kormos: Mr Sampson mentions that it’s 11:47. I can’t, for the life of me, understand why opposition members participate in government motions to have these pre-Christmas-break midnight sessions. The government is interested in using the late-hour sittings for leveraging all sorts of things out of opposition members that opposition members, for better or worse, wouldn’t be prepared to deal away in any way, shape or form. There is no press gallery here scrutinizing what’s going on, which I suppose sometimes is better for all concerned. The press isn’t here and people aren’t watching. People who do click in think it’s a re-run, which is why I am pleased to remind them it’s 11:50 on Monday, December 18, and this is live. The bill has been time-allocated.

You didn’t send this bill out to committee because you’re afraid of what committee exposure would have done in terms of exposing your agenda, your plans for our prisons and your complete disregard for community safety, your complete disregard, expressed over and over again, for victims. Victims were mocked today by the Minister of Correctional Services. People who look for government to provide it with some structure to, yes, help make safer communities are offended at the proposition that good grooming is going to replace rehabilitation and programs in our provincial correctional institutions.

We know that once the private sector grabs hold of these institutions, once the deal’s finished, once all the signatures are on the dotted line, where there are huge profits to be made by the private sector, almost inevitably American, corporate, for-profit operators, who not only will be reaping the great profits from public dollars but will be draining them back into the United States—they won’t even stay in the province of Ontario. You, former Minister of Correctional Services, have paved the way for a complete seizure of corrections by non-Canadian operators. You know—and if you don’t, you ought to know; it should have been available to you in briefings—that once the American private for-profit sector, like the Wackenhuts, like the Corrections Corps of America, get their hands on our correctional services, unlike Great Britain, unlike Australia, unlike New Zealand, the prospect of them ever being returned to the public sector becomes very marginalized. These guys are trading them away so their corporate buddies can make huge profits.

2350

This government and its present and former Ministers of Correctional Services have no interest in or familiarity with what is going on in our correctional system, and have had as their primary goal the gutting of it so they create crisis after crisis, the very sorts of crises exposed most recently by the auditor, the very sorts of crises that correctional officers, if only you would have sat down and talked with them, would have been prepared to talk to you about any place in Ontario any time, you name the location. But no, this government and its Ministers of Correctional Services are more interested in being wined and dined by the Wackenhutts and the Corrections Corps of America and letting those operators write policy for the Ministry of Correctional Services and the government

of Ontario. The stakes are high. There are huge profits to be made. And you guys, this government, the Mike Harris Tories, are handing it over. They're handing it over, lock, stock and barrel. The people who are being victimized are the taxpayers of this province and the people who look to their government to create some semblance of security and protection from crime in their communities. We will not be supporting this bill.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I would like to thank the members from Stoney Creek and Durham for their comments, as well as all the opposition members, particularly the member from Niagara. He's always so colourful to listen to.

On third reading of Bill 144, the Corrections Accountability Act: since 1995 our government has made important changes to the province's justice system. It's clear where we stand. We have put more police officers on the streets, increased support for victims and set tough new standards for the parole board. We're investing \$450 million to build and improve correctional facilities with state-of-the-art security measures and reinforced materials to make them among the strongest and safest in the world.

Our corrections ministry is overseeing some long overdue reforms that are necessary to protect the public from crime and to introduce more efficiency into our system. Year after year, and we've heard this over and over tonight, auditor's reports show that we need to be more efficient. I'd like to point out that the minister has taken a leadership role in spearheading a reform of our system that will help to lower the average reoffending rate and help ensure that the tax dollars that we collect here in Ontario are spent more efficiently and at a savings to the hard-working citizens of the province.

Within our publicly run young offender facilities, we have an average reoffending rate of 60% and our adult facilities have rates of 70% to 80%. At the same time, these are the most expensive correctional facilities to operate in all of Canada. This means that when a youth goes into a correctional facility, they have a 60% chance of recommitting a crime. The same can be said of adults, who have a much higher reoffending rate. This is completely unacceptable.

We believe one way of improving the quality of services is by introducing competition to the correctional system. We are seeing success in our first public-private partnership model, Project Turnaround. Project Turnaround is not Camp Turnaround, and it's not in Barrie; it's in Hillsdale and it's called Project Turnaround. I listened to some comments by the opposition. I think they've even got that mixed up with the Brookside unit. The contract the government has with Encourage Youth Corp of Canada, the operator, outlines performance standards based on the reoffending rates.

The strict discipline program for young offenders has been running for over two years with promising results with some of the most difficult young offenders in Ontario. As much as I can understand, there has been

only one problem, only one time, and that was the very first day it was open. That's the only time, and I would invite anyone to go up and ask the management to see if they can tour that facility and see how much is really wrong with Project Turnaround. We've heard the fear-mongering and the scare tactics, the same nonsense that the member for Brant has vomited out for over a year now. It's almost pathetic, what's really happening here.

We've talked about competition and choice in all sorts of projects that governments run. The province of Ontario is building two 1,200-unit facilities in this province, one in Lindsay and one in Penetang, through a five-year pilot project. There's nothing wrong with that. I don't see any problem with operating one facility by the private sector and one by the public sector. They both report to the Ministry of Correctional Services, and at the end of five years, let's compare how these two operators perform. I see nothing wrong with that and I think the people of Ontario expect nothing less than that.

We heard it earlier from the member from Kingston. He talked about how these people who are in provincially run facilities are only in there for two years less a day and are non-violent offenders. That's not what the critic for the opposition has been saying for over a year. He's been fearmongering and running scare tactics throughout the province saying that these are the most violent people on the face of the earth. Unfortunately what he wasn't seeing was he wasn't comparing it to the federal correctional facilities that put cop-killers in minimum-security facilities right across our country.

Over and over we've pointed out examples to you and you've never yet shown any leadership at all in trying to ask the federal correctional system to at least look into it. You've done nothing. You've fearmongered and used scare tactics on everyone in Ontario and you've failed at it. I'm sorry, but you've failed at it.

It's been a pleasure to take a few minutes tonight to make a few comments on Bill 144.

The Speaker: Mr Baird has moved third reading of Bill 144, An Act to establish accountability in correctional services, to make offenders demonstrate that they are drug-free, to set rules for offenders to earn their release, to give the Board of Parole a say in earned release decisions, and to change the name of the Board of Parole.

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

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

"Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I would like to request that the vote on Bill 144 be deferred until tomorrow at Deferred Votes." It is therefore so ordered.

It now being 12 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1159.

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