



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario
Second Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario
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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 25 April 2001

Mercredi 25 avril 2001

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 25 April 2001

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 25 avril 2001

*The House met at 1331.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SMALL BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I'll take the opportunity to speak a bit about the announcement by the Minister of Consumer and Business Services this past Monday. The announcement concerned the registration of vital statistics on-line and I'm very disappointed. This doesn't do anything for the small business community in Ontario. The small business community in Ontario is normally used to the extolling of the importance, the virtues and the contribution that they make to our province and indeed to all the people in Ontario. But when it comes to help on a daily basis, we see absolutely nothing coming from this particular government.

There are a number of areas where the small business community is looking to the government to assist them in providing much necessary help. Tax is the number one enemy of the small business community in Ontario. Now, the deregulation and the sale of Ontario Hydro is going to affect in a very adverse manner the operations of the small business people in Ontario. They have limited resources to face the challenges on a daily basis, new technologies which they cannot afford. Accessing new financing for the small business community is absolutely vital to continue to thrive in a very competitive market.

I hope, when the minister engages himself in this consultation process with the stakeholders, that he will come back to this House and announce good reforms, good changes that will bring long-term stability to the small business community in Ontario.

Do I have another 40 seconds, or are we going back in our time? I'm delighted to take them.

Interjection.

Mr Sergio: Yes, indeed. I have to bring this message to the House, not only to you, Mr Speaker, but to the members of the government, that when it comes to extolling the virtues of small business, we say that small business people in Ontario have created 80% to 85% of the jobs in the last five to seven years, but on an individual basis the small business community is left on its own.

This is what I want to tell the minister: Do come back to the House and bring reforms that indeed will bring

long-lasting stability and sustainability to the small business people in Ontario.

NORTHUMBERLAND ECONOMY

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I rise in the House today to talk about an excellent example of how working together indeed achieves results. Two weeks ago, federal member of Parliament Paul Macklin, County Warden Bill Finley and myself combined efforts to co-ordinate an economic summit in my riding of Northumberland. This day-long conference was held at the beautiful Golden Beach Resort on Rice Lake. The reason for organizing this event was to discover ways to re-invigorate our local economy. It was an opportunity for local leaders to review our present situation and discuss opportunities for future initiatives.

More than 80 people attended this brainstorming session, including representatives from economic development offices, post-secondary institutions, government officials and local business owners. All in all, the day was a great success, leaving participants enthused about our prospects for moving forward with a great county-wide economic development strategy.

A clever man once said, "If we don't hang together, we will most assuredly all hang separately." That being said, I take this opportunity to thank all of those who took part, and to commend Mr Macklin and Mr Finley for working with me to improve Northumberland's economic environment.

EDUCATION LABOUR DISPUTES

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): Fury, outrage, shame: these are the words that the people of St Paul's have shared with me, and these are the words that I feel describe what Mike Harris has done to our public education system. We have a system in crisis and a system in turmoil, and we now have an incredibly sad and shameful situation where the symbolism has met with the reality and the schools are literally infested with rodents. They literally stink. They're literally full of garbage. Of course, right now we have 560 schools closed in Toronto, affecting over 300,000 students. Over 20,000 students have been out in Toronto for four weeks.

On the other hand, instead of taking the \$1.8 billion out of education that Mike Harris did and instead of tying the hands of everybody with their funding formula, Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals have put

forward positive solutions for peace and progress in our public education system. I urge the residents of St Paul's to call me if they want details on that.

The parents have told me that they think this government doesn't care about kids and working families and public education, they think they're warring with workers for the sake of warring with workers, and that they would forgo their \$200 cheque in a second if their kids could get some quality public education. It's time for the government of Ontario to act on the solutions put forward by the Ontario Liberals, for the sake of the kids now and for the next generation.

CUTBACKS

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I have a little story that was allegedly written by the Premier. It reads in the following manner:

(1) For considerable periods, the four oboe players had nothing to do. Their number should be reduced and their work spread out over the whole orchestra.

(2) Forty violins were playing identical notes. This is unnecessary duplication and the section should be drastically cut. If a larger volume of sound is required, it could be achieved through an electronic amplifier. However, no extra funding will be provided for the amplifier. The musicians must raise the funding for this themselves.

(3) Musicians will only be paid for the number of minutes that they are actually performing. This does not include rehearsal time. Rests in the music will be added up and deducted from each paycheque.

(4) The lesser instruments, such as tuba and trombone, do not need time with a qualified conductor. A music technician could be contracted to do the job instead.

(5) No useful purpose is served by repeating with horns the passage that has already been handled by the strings. If all such redundant passages were eliminated, the concert could be reduced to 20 minutes.

The Premier is a cultured man. He knows what he's talking about.

1340

HORSE RIDING SAFETY

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): As spring arrives in Ontario, many children start to think of their upcoming birthdays and to plan an activity to make their party the best among their friends. Children love horses, and a day at the riding stable with their friends is a fantastic birthday party event. An ever-increasing number of Ontarians are choosing to go horseback riding for recreational purposes, but many of these weekend riders are inexperienced and have no idea what to expect.

Many of the riders are children who do not have the strength to control a large and unpredictable animal. Several of these children have been hurt and some have been killed in accidents which could have been prevented. A riding helmet, boots and breakaway stirrups

are simple pieces of equipment which need to be worn every time, every ride.

If 10-year-old Elizabeth Hader had been provided with safety gear on that April Sunday in 1999, she might be alive today. It is nothing less than a tragedy that a little girl who loved horses was involved in such a senseless accident.

For this reason, I would like to take this opportunity to inform the House about an important piece of legislation, An Act to increase the safety of equestrian riders, which will be introduced today. My private member's bill is scheduled for second reading on May 3.

An Act to increase the safety of equestrian riders is a much-needed piece of legislation to provide minimum safety standards to an unregulated industry. By requiring that riding establishments provide certified helmets and proper footgear to riders under 18, we will be putting the safety of our young people first, and we will be doing everything we can to see that preventable accidents are just that—prevented.

I ask for your support of my private member's bill.

PARKINSON'S AWARENESS MONTH

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): Pierre Elliott Trudeau, Janet Reno, Michael J. Fox: there are common threads among these people. I would like to read a proclamation to the House:

"Whereas the Parkinson Society of Canada is a national non-profit voluntary organization; and

"Whereas the Brantford and Area Parkinson Support Group provides information and support to Parkinsonians and their families that meet the second Wednesday of every month from 2 pm to 4 pm at the Church of the Nazarene; and

"Whereas the Brantford and Area Parkinson Support Group actively supports research to find the cause and the cure of Parkinson's disease;

"Therefore, I proclaim the month of April 2001 as Parkinson's Awareness Month."

This proclamation, read into this record, the federal record and the municipal record, was spearheaded by a local citizen who became involved in this organization due to his own situation. This is a letter he wrote that was published in the Brantford and Area Parkinson Support Group magazine, and I quote:

"I am 49 years old and I was diagnosed with Parkinson's four years ago. My symptoms became severe enough to go on disability last year. Brantford was holding its first annual Superwalk in September, where the local MPP was a guest speaker and was to lead the walk. Knowing I had Parkinson's, he invited me to come along, so I did, one half-hour before the start. Needless to say, I had no sponsors.

I was so impressed with the people that I met that I started to attend the support meetings. I felt I could be of some help, so I asked the facilitator to give me some sponsor sheets for the next year. She gave me about 50. I have, as of April, filled 45 of them and have asked for

200 more. My plan is to make more than all of Brantford did last year, and at \$6,350 I am well on my way.

"I volunteered for the Superwalk committee ... and have begun as co-facilitator in Brantford. With help, I lined up four guest speakers.... These people are so nice and very supportive. God bless them all."

He now devotes his time to educating schoolchildren and raising funds for researching Parkinson's disease. I personally offer my thanks and prayers to my brother and his family as they fight this courageous fight.

EDUCATION LABOUR DISPUTES

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I'm very disappointed when I hear of the current condition of schools in the Toronto District School Board due to the strike of the public school support workers.

In our homes, I would hope we would not create and leave garbage around as is happening in the schools. In our homes and businesses, do we not pick up after ourselves? We don't vandalize our buildings, furnishings and other items we need and use daily. I understand that, in some schools, stairs and walls have been smeared with eggs. Paint bombs have been thrown at the outside of the buildings. Toilets have been plugged with paper and other objects. Garbage is accumulating in the hallways. Windows, historically valued art work and other items have been smashed. Who is creating this mess and destruction, strikers or students?

We all know the value of education and how fortunate we are in Ontario and Canada to have the opportunity to go to school. Why, then, do we have to close our schools due to vandalism and lack of personal responsibility for garbage and dirt that those who attend the schools have created? Maybe we should teach more about life skills, respect and responsibility.

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): On April 1, I received a letter from a constituent who is wondering when the legislation for the Ontario disabilities act will be passed. I will quote from Susan's letter:

"My husband has multiple sclerosis and is in a wheelchair. We have had to make many renovations to our home in order to make it accessible for the wheelchair. We didn't have a choice....

"Every day of our lives we are faced with barriers. Recently I took my husband to the eye specialist. We get in the office and the secretary doesn't know if the wheelchair will fit. It doesn't, off we go—we were told that the appointment should have been made through McMaster." This is fine, given that even with three weeks' notice, we can't get DARTS to accommodate him. "On our way out my husband has to use the bathroom. I ask the lady at the snack bar where is there an

accessible bathroom." She said yes: "It is down in the basement."

"On New Year's Eve we went out for dinner. We started researching an accessible restaurant, we asked all the right questions." Unfortunately we didn't check it out physically. "It was accessible as far as getting in the door," but once we were in, "forget it. Our friend and myself pretty well had to dismantle the wheelchair to get it in the bathroom, stand guard outside the door...." Imagine, Mr Speaker, what this does for the dignity of the gentleman. "You get past," Susan says, "being embarrassed when you are angry."

They visited their daughter and had trouble accessing the bathrooms there. The hotel was only partially accessible. Susan says these are only a few examples of what they encounter.

These are legitimate complaints. I agree with my constituent. If a society is judged by how it treats its weak and vulnerable, Mike Harris should be ashamed of himself with respect to what he has done to society in Ontario.

CONESTOGO DAM

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I rise on a crucially important issue in my riding of Waterloo-Wellington, and that is the need to repair the Conestogo dam.

Described by the Globe and Mail as one of Ontario's largest dams, Conestogo dam controls water flow for the Conestogo River and the Grand River, affecting the water supply for much of Waterloo region and the city of Brantford.

The gates on this dam, which normally control the flow of water, are broken, and it's estimated that it will cost between \$1.2 million and \$1.5 million to repair them. In the spring, without repairs, the dam could fail or collapse, resulting in a catastrophic flash flood in which lives most likely would be lost.

In the summertime, when the river water flow is low, the dam gates are opened to raise the levels and cleanse the water downstream. If the gates aren't working properly, drinking water could become dangerous. These are worst-case scenarios, but they're identified as realistic by the Grand River Conservation Authority. They believe the province must be a major partner in paying for the repairs to make absolutely certain that these worst-case scenarios never happen.

I support this position. I have raised this issue with the Premier in a private meeting earlier this year, with the government caucus, and I want to thank the Minister of Natural Resources for meeting with leaders of the Grand River Conservation Authority. The minister also attended the recent meeting that I arranged for GRCA officials with David Lindsay, president and CEO of the SuperBuild Corp. Yesterday, I had a chance to raise this issue with the Deputy Premier and the Minister of Finance.

My position on this matter is clear: the province of Ontario cannot abdicate its responsibility to assist conservation authorities in necessary flood control projects. I will continue to raise this issue until it's resolved.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the first report of the standing committee on government agencies. Pursuant to standing order 106(e), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

1350

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

STUDENT HEALTH AND SAFETY PROGRAMS ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001 SUR LES PROGRAMMES DE SANTÉ ET DE SÉCURITÉ POUR ÉTUDIANTS

Mr Gravelle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 9, An Act to bring health and safety programs to Ontario students / Projet de loi 9, Loi visant à offrir des programmes de santé et de sécurité aux étudiants de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried. The member, for a short statement.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): As you know, this coming Saturday, April 28, is the national day of mourning for workers who lost their lives on the job. It is with that in mind that I have reintroduced my private member's bill, An Act to bring health and safety programs to Ontario students.

What better tribute could we pay to those who have lost their lives than to bring forward legislation that could save lives in the future? This legislation, which was initiated almost five years ago by Ross Singleton of the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups in Thunder Bay, will guarantee needed health and safety instruction in the classroom for all Ontario students.

I hope that all members of the House will support the need for this guarantee to be legislated into law and will support it throughout the process.

LIMITATIONS ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001 SUR LA PRESCRIPTION DES ACTIONS

Mr Young moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 10, An Act to revise the Limitations Act / Projet de loi 10, Loi révisant la Loi sur la prescription des actions.

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

Hon David Young (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): This bill, if passed, would reform and dramatically modernize the existing Limitations Act, and that is a law that was passed in 1910.

The existing act is based on a number of English statutes dating back to the 16th century. No major changes have been made to the law on limitations for almost a decade.

The proposed Limitations Act, 2001, would consolidate many limitation periods into one statute and create two very clear and very fair time limits. Our government believes there are certain circumstances, however, where there should be no restrictions placed upon a lawsuit. Those circumstances would provide special exceptions to protect vulnerable people, to protect the environment and to protect the public purse.

If passed, the bill would eliminate confusion and would balance the interests of plaintiffs with the interests of defendants. For plaintiffs, this would mean they would have enough time to discover a claim and start a law suit. For defendants, this would mean that after a set period of time they would have greater certainty in their lives.

CITY OF ELLIOT LAKE ACT, 2001

Mr Brown moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr4, An Act respecting the City of Elliot Lake.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Pursuant to standing order 84, this bill is referred to the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

REMEMBRANCE DAY OBSERVANCE AMENDMENT ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'OBSERVATION DU JOUR DU SOUVENIR

Mr Wood moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 11, An Act to amend the Remembrance Day Observance Act, 1997 / Projet de loi 11, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur l'observation du jour du Souvenir.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried. The member, for a short statement.

Mr Bob Wood (London West): This bill grants employees the right to take a leave of absence from work without pay of three hours between 10 am and 1 pm on each Remembrance Day so that they may participate in observances for those who died serving their country in wars and in peacekeeping efforts.

Attendance was up at Remembrance Day ceremonies last year in many communities in Ontario, and this was

due in part to the fact that many were not at work on a Saturday. This bill, if passed, will give almost everyone the chance to observe Remembrance Day in the way he or she deems most appropriate. This bill is substantially similar to one I introduced in the last session.

HORSE RIDING SAFETY ACT, 2001
LOI DE 2001 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ
DES CAVALIERS

Mrs Molinari moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 12, An Act to increase the safety of equestrian riders / Projet de loi 12, Loi visant à accroître la sécurité des cavaliers.

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

The member for Thornhill for a short statement.

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): The purpose of the Horse Riding Safety Act, 2001, a private member's bill, is to increase the safety of horse riders under the age of 18 by requiring the operators of riding establishments to ensure that riders use proper safety equipment, including safety helmets.

I am bringing this bill forward in memory of Elizabeth Hader, who passed away just two years ago on April 18, 1999, and countless other children throughout the province who have met untimely deaths as a result of unsafe riding conditions in the province of Ontario. The bill also amends the Highway Traffic Act and makes it an offence for any rider under the age of 18 years to ride or be mounted on a horse on a highway without the proper safety equipment.

Parents and guardians of riders under the age of 16 would also be guilty of an offence if they authorize or knowingly permit young riders to contravene the proposed provisions.

BACK TO SCHOOL ACT
(TORONTO AND WINDSOR), 2001

LOI DE 2001 SUR LE RETOUR
À L'ÉCOLE (TORONTO ET WINDSOR)

Mr Stockwell moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 13, An Act to resolve labour disputes affecting the Toronto District School Board and the Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board / Projet de loi 13, Loi visant à régler les conflits de travail qui touchent les conseils scolaires de district appelés Toronto District School Board et Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board.

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

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1358 to 1403.

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

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Ecker, Janet	Munro, Julia
Arnott, Ted	Elliott, Brenda	Mushinski, Marilyn
Baird, John R.	Flaherty, Jim	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Galt, Doug	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Beaubien, Marcel	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Boyer, Claudette	Hardeman, Ernie	Pupatello, Sandra
Bradley, James J.	Hastings, John	Runciman, Robert W.
Brown, Michael A.	Hodgson, Chris	Sampson, Rob
Bryant, Michael	Hudak, Tim	Sergio, Mario
Caplan, David	Jackson, Cameron	Spina, Joseph
Clark, Brad	Johns, Helen	Sterling, Norman W.
Cleary, John C.	Johnson, Bert	Stewart, R. Gary
Clement, Tony	Kennedy, Gerard	Stockwell, Chris
Coburn, Brian	Klees, Frank	Tsubouchi, David H.
Colle, Mike	Kwinter, Monte	Turnbull, David
Cordiano, Joseph	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Crozier, Bruce	Martiniuk, Gerry	Wilson, Jim
Cunningham, Dianne	Maves, Bart	Witmer, Elizabeth
Di Cocco, Caroline	Mazzilli, Frank	Wood, Bob
Dombrowsky, Leona	McGuinty, Dalton	Young, David
Duncan, Dwight	Miller, Norm	
Dunlop, Garfield	Molinari, Tina R.	

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

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Marchese, Rosario
Christopherson, David	Lankin, Frances	Martin, Tony
Hampton, Howard		

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 64; the nays are 7.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

The Minister, for a short statement.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): I'll have a minister's statement.

BRAIN TUMOUR
AWARENESS MONTH ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001 SUR LE MOIS
DE LA SENSIBILISATION
AUX TUMEURS CÉRÉBRALES

Mr Wood moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 14, An Act to encourage awareness of the need for the early detection and treatment of brain tumours / Projet de loi 14, Loi visant à favoriser la sensibilisation à la nécessité du dépistage et du traitement précoces des tumeurs cérébrales.

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

Does the member have a short statement?

Mr Bob Wood (London West): Mr Speaker, this bill points out that early detection and treatment of brain tumours are vital to survive from this devastating disease.

Brain tumours strike people of all ages, from new-borns to seniors, crossing all economic, social and ethnic boundaries and all walks of life. Brain tumour research,

patient and family support services and awareness among the general public are essential to promote early detection and treatment of brain tumours.

The bill proposes that the month of October in each year be proclaimed Brain Tumour Awareness Month. I hope that October 2001 will be the first such month. This bill is substantially similar to one which I introduced in the last session, and in response to which I have received over 100 letters of support from across Canada.

GREATER JUDICIAL APPOINTMENTS
ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001
SUR UNE OBLIGATION ACCRUE
DE RENDRE COMPTE EN CE QUI
CONCERNE LES NOMINATIONS
À LA MAGISTRATURE

Mr Wood moved the first reading of the following bill:

Bill 15, An Act to provide for greater accountability in judicial appointments / Projet de loi 15, Loi visant à accroître l'obligation de rendre compte en ce qui concerne les nominations à la magistrature.

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

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

All those opposed will please say nay.

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Does the member have a short statement?

Mr Bob Wood (London West): Mr Speaker, this bill is intended to provide greater public accountability for judicial appointments. It proposes to do that by making the appointment process for justices of the peace the same as that for judges: having the Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee publish the criteria used in assessing candidates; permitting the Legislature by resolution to set or change these criteria; having the names of all the people found qualified and suitable for appointment submitted to the Attorney General for consideration; and requiring approval by the Legislature of all proposed appointments before they become effective.

For the first time in the history of this province, the Legislature would set the criteria for judicial appointments and the Attorney General would be responsible to the Legislature for following them in each and every appointment. Surely, it is time to take this process out of the back rooms and put it fully in the hands of all the elected representatives. Transparency and democracy do work.

This bill is substantially similar to one which I introduced and which received first reading in the last session.

1410

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): On a point of order: I seek unanimous consent to debate and pass a resolution which I have already tabled.

Briefly, the title of the resolution is a Liberal back-to-school plan. It would have the effect of quickly and fairly resolving the disputes presently in Toronto and Windsor.

The Speaker: The leader of the official opposition has asked for unanimous consent to introduce a motion that deals with ending the education strikes. Is it agreed? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

SMART GROWTH

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): It gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to address the ninth step in our government's action plan to keep Ontario strong: Smart Growth. Over the past six years our government has put conditions in place so that Ontario is strong, growing and competitive. We are building not only for today; we are building for tomorrow. Smart Growth builds on our vision for Ontario's future. It's a vision that encourages growth. It's one that will make sure all regions in the province, from the smallest village to the largest city, can reach their economic potential.

Growth improves our standard of living. It allows for sustainability of our health system and our social safety net. Growth must also improve our quality of life. Smart Growth is based on three main principles: a strong economy, strong communities and a healthy environment. Our vision is for a made-in-Ontario plan, and it will mean a brighter future for people in every part of our province.

All Ontarians understand the need for planning. Just as you plan for a new home or a vacation or retirement, so must our government plan for the future of our province.

To date, our government policies have led to more than 822,000 net new jobs in Ontario. More than 578,000 people have escaped welfare. Businesses are investing again and expanding. Homes are being built at a very rapid pace. Since 1995, more than 300,000 new homes have been built in the province. Over the same period, more than 80,000 homebuyers have benefited from this government's land tax rebate transfer programs.

The population too is growing. From nine million people in 1985, Ontario grew to 11.5 million in 2000 and is expected to be home to 14 million people by the year 2015. That's a lot of people who will need schools, hospitals, homes and roads, and our government has recognized the need to plan for this growth. We must plan for more than just infrastructure. We must plan, and plan smartly. It is important that we consider all the needs in all areas and use our resources wisely, strategically and well.

Smart Growth offers provincial and local decision-makers a forward-thinking, long-term approach for doing just that. We will ask tough questions: what kind of life

do we want for ourselves and for our children five years out, 10 years out, 20 years from now? Will we live in cities or in suburbs? Will we live in rural or in urban? How can we ensure the best use of land in each? How do we reduce gridlock? How do we save our air, and where do we put our parks? With our commitment to a strong economy, strong communities and a healthy environment as a guide, Smart Growth will provide a filter, a context to help us respond to these questions.

It will also help us direct resources so that we can consume fewer natural resources while enabling more ambitious development goals. It will help us revitalize our city cores. It will focus on making our communities more livable. It will support using the infrastructure we have effectively, and building and using any new infrastructure in an efficient way. It will link decisions on transportation, infrastructure, planning and public investment.

Smart Growth is all about promoting growth and managing it well. It will offer Ontarians choice and flexibility, no matter where they live in the province. It will help Ontario grow responsibly, for our benefit and for the benefit of our children and our grandchildren.

Our vision of Smart Growth has as one of its three main pillars an economy that is strong, growing and competitive. As you know, it is through a strong economy and new jobs that Ontarians gain hope, opportunity and prosperity. It is also through a strong economy that government can support those services that mean so much to the people of Ontario, like quality health care and education. But economic growth just does not happen on its own. It stems from difficult choices, like cutting taxes and balancing the books and reducing red tape. Our government will continue to make the tough decisions needed to keep Ontario on the right track.

Smart Growth will not just happen either. It too will require tough decisions and right choices. That's why today I'm announcing that this spring, our government will continue to hold consultations across Ontario to build co-operation among partners and gather the innovative ideas necessary to support a successful made-in-Ontario Smart Growth strategy.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Hodgson: I realize there are other parties that don't like to consult the people of Ontario. They like to prefer to rely on American experts. That's not our approach.

The government will review the Planning Act and then propose amendments necessary to meet the Smart Growth needs of the 21st century.

SuperBuild Corp will help increase investment in Ontario's infrastructure by exploring and developing innovative partnerships with businesses and other levels of government.

The government will introduce legislation to encourage the clean-up and revitalization of former industrial and commercial sites, known as brownfields.

The government stands firmly behind our commitment to the redevelopment of Toronto's waterfront.

We have set ourselves ambitious, yet achievable goals. Our goal is for Ontario to enjoy the best-performing economy and the highest quality of life in North America. Our made-in-Ontario vision of Smart Growth is instrumental to this goal, where it will be synonymous with a strong, efficient and competitive economy, sound neighbourhoods and communities and a clean, healthy environment. It will allow us to meet the challenges of the 21st century and it will mean a better quality of life for all the people of Ontario.

Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Transportation): During the past six years, our government has made tough choices, and as a result Ontario is once again one of the best places in the world to live, work and raise a family.

My ministry's contribution to Smart Growth will be to provide more effective, more efficient transportation services and lower transportation-related pollution. A more effective and efficient transportation system will support continued economic investment and the creation of new jobs. It will also preserve our quality of life.

Every day, millions of people travel our highways. Businesses rely on our highway system to get the materials that go into their products. When these products are finished, the highways are used to get them to market.

I am pleased to be able to announce several new initiatives today. First, Ontario must prepare for the dramatic population and economic growth of the future. We must ensure access to markets in the United States and support our tourism industry, so we will work with other governments to create modern international gateways at the Windsor and Niagara borders.

This spring the government will review the results of the Niagara Peninsula needs assessment study. In addition to being one of Ontario's principle economic gateways, the Niagara Peninsula is also one of our province's prime tourist spots, and we will take decisive action to address the area's long-range transportation requirements.

As we look to promote economic development throughout the Niagara and Hamilton areas, we will also look to reduce the pressure on the tender-fruit lands of Niagara. These are one of our province's most important agricultural assets and they must be preserved.

Smart Growth means that as we develop a highway system to meet Ontario's future needs, we are also sensitive to the needs of both communities and the environment.

Our government will also explore adding carpool and commuter bus lanes to provincial highways to improve traffic flow and air quality in Ontario. This initiative will reward commuters who relieve highway congestion by carpooling. It will also reward those who reduce the number of vehicles on the road by taking buses.

1420

Earlier this spring I announced my ministry would undertake several transportation needs assessments. These studies will help us preserve and protect future highway corridors and identify which existing roads need to be—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): It's a little too loud in here. We give a little bit of leeway, but it's getting past that, where I can't hear. Just remember, you get a reply to this and if you start, the other side is going to start. So I'd appreciate your co-operation.

Sorry, Minister, for the interruption.

Hon Mr Clark: Thank you, Mr Speaker. When it comes time to undertake this work, we must consider how we can best utilize public partnerships to expand the province's highway network. To that end, the Ministry of Transportation and the Ontario SuperBuild Corp will lead an interministerial task force coordinating a review of the expansion of our province's 400 series. Their goal will be to find ways to build new roads without putting the fiscal burden on the taxpayers.

Our government will also work with municipalities to re-establish a consistent, driver-friendly system of designation for Ontario's provincial highways and municipal roads.

In a sixth new initiative, we will consult with the coroner, emergency crews and others to explore ways of opening highways more quickly following accidents. We expect to have their recommendations by the end of this year.

I would like to conclude today by noting that my ministry is very pleased to be able to take an active role in contributing to the government's made-in-Ontario Smart Growth strategy. In the weeks and months to come, I am confident that our efforts, along with those being made by other ministries and agencies, will lead to a healthy and prosperous future for Ontario.

EDUCATION LABOUR DISPUTES

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): As members are aware, staff of the Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board have been on strike since March 26 and staff at the Toronto District School Board have been on strike since March 31. In both situations contract bargaining has come to an impasse. It should be obvious to all members that with the continuance of the current disruption, the successful completion of the students' studies at both boards is adversely affected.

As a responsible government, we cannot allow our children's education to be held hostage by labour negotiations which at this time are going nowhere. We have given the school boards and the unions time to achieve a mutually acceptable negotiated settlement. Now the priority is to get the children's education back on track. That is why today I've introduced a bill entitled the Back to School Act (Toronto and Windsor), 2001. This bill would get students back into the classrooms and end both strikes.

The government always prefers that disputes be resolved through the collective bargaining process. The bill, if passed, would order school boards to resume normal operations as soon as possible, at the latest, two days after the act comes into force.

If negotiations fail, the matters at both boards will go to mediation-arbitration. Under the legislation, if passed,

a neutral third party will be appointed as a mediator-arbitrator for each dispute. In particular, Ross L. Kennedy would be appointed for Windsor and Stephen C. Raymond for Toronto.

Until new agreements are reached, the terms and conditions of employment would remain those that were in effect when the labour disruption began. The bill also would provide for maximum penalties of \$2,000 for individuals and \$25,000 per board or union for non-compliance. Each day of non-compliance would be a separate offence.

We want the parties to reach an agreement and achieve a quick ending to their labour negotiations. We want school boards and their employees to be able to negotiate a fair and reasonable contract. But this must be done without disruption to students in the classroom. The best solution is a local solution, where the school board and the union achieve a mutually acceptable, fiscally responsible negotiated settlement. In fact, in many cases, local solutions have been reached with agreements that are fair to both employees and taxpayers.

Like parents, the government does not want children's education disrupted because of disputes between school boards and unions. We want students to benefit from Ontario's challenging new curriculum and assure the province of quality provided by province-wide standards. That is why we are continuing to put students first by introducing the proposed Back to School Act (Toronto and Windsor), 2001.

If passed, this bill would provide a fair and balanced approach. It would get Toronto's students back in their classrooms, it would allow the school boards and the unions to continue to negotiate toward a fair settlement. If the school boards and unions are unable to resolve their differences, the act would provide them with access to mediation-arbitration to help reach a settlement.

I know the children in Toronto and Windsor-Essex want their schools to return to normal. We want these students in school, learning and growing. I ask all members to support this legislation and to allow us to proceed to second and third readings today, so our children's education will get back to normal as soon as possible.

Hopefully, with all-party support this bill could be passed in this House today and we could have the children back in school as soon as possible.

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): I wish to respond to the Minister of Labour's statement and his legislation.

Today, I am proud to announce that we have tabled a back-to-school plan. It's a plan that is fair, it's a plan that is fast and, most importantly, it's a plan that is in the best interests of our working families. If the government will endorse this plan, we can have our children back in school tomorrow in Toronto and in Windsor.

Our plan calls for the following: schools to reopen immediately; striking support workers and the school boards to take the dispute to binding arbitration with a significant new component, and that component is the following:

We would give the arbitrator the power to order the Harris government to invest more in education in order to reach a fair settlement. In other words, the arbitrator would be able to take into account the boards' ability to pay and the province's ability to fund education properly.

The plan is fair. It makes it perfectly clear that the buck stops with the provincial government, which is the source of funding in education and this is the source of the current crisis in our schools.

I can tell you the plan is fast. If the government will endorse this plan, we can have our kids back in school tomorrow. Back-to-work legislation, on the other hand, could take several days to pass as the third party has signalled its intention to slow its passage. We urge the government to put the interests of our children and the interests of our working families first.

We urge the government to adopt our resolution and make the necessary amendments to legislation. This will allow the reopening of our schools in a way that's faster and fairer and in the best interests of Ontario families.

We on this side of the House are on the side of working families. Schoolchildren in Windsor are into their fifth week of a strike. In Toronto, many of the children have been out of school for four weeks running now. Working families are looking to us to do two things for them. First of all, they want their children back in school. Secondly—and we are working actively on this front—they are looking for a new government that puts the interests of their children ahead of ideology.

Unlike this government, we are working hard to earn the trust of Ontario's working families. That's why we brought forward a peace plan that will return extra-curricular activities to our schools. It's a good plan, but today's headlines tell us the government still prefers labour war to peace in our schools. It's also why we put forward a plan to invest in our schools, starting with smaller class sizes. Again, the government has failed to adopt those of our ideas which require an investment in the future.

We urge the government not to make that same mistake for a third time running. We urge the government to instead adopt our back-to-school plan, a plan that is fairer and faster and in the best interests of our children and our working families.

SMART GROWTH

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): For the third day running, I had a chance today to witness part of the Mike Harris nearly dead tour. Today the issue is smart growth, where made-in-Ontario smart growth has been exposed as smart growth by dummies. Today's announcements on smart growth do nothing to get at the core issues. They do nothing to help the commuters in Ontario deal with it.

There was one new initiative, though, to the credit of the government: it wants to remove the carnage from the roads faster after accidents. If only could we wish that we could more quickly remove the carnage of that government from the Legislature and get on with reducing

gridlock in a meaningful way in developing better communities.

Interjections.

1430

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Stop the clock. Just before we begin, the member for Simcoe North, come to order. You've been shouting out. I've yelled, "Order," three times now. This is your last warning; and while we're at it, the member for London-Fanshawe, it's his last warning as well.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I'll take my five-minute speech and deliver it in 20 seconds.

Fundamentally, we on this side of the House want to know, like in the old Wendy's commercial, "Where's the beef?" Einstein, a famous scientist, once defined "insanity" as doing things the same way as they've always been done and expecting a different result. I hope that isn't what you mean by Smart Growth.

EDUCATION LABOUR DISPUTES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I have a few comments on the government's so-called back-to-work legislation. First I want to respond directly, though, to the comments made by the Minister of Labour where he says, "Contract bargaining has come to an impasse."

That is not true. Here in Toronto they are still trying to bargain, and in Windsor the representative of the board has written a letter asking the union to continue bargaining. So we need to have it established right off the bat that the parties want to continue to bargain, and they are continuing to bargain.

Further, if the government's priority is that children be back in school, then why don't you put back the \$16 million your government has pocketed during this labour dispute for the Toronto Board of Education and the \$4 million you've pocketed in Windsor during the labour dispute there? There we would have the makings to ensure that a collective agreement could be negotiated and signed.

Everybody in this province should read this back-to-work legislation. It is abominable, and I want to quote from it. First of all, the government says there are going to be neutral arbitrators. Read the legislation. It says, "If a mediator-arbitrator is unable or unwilling to perform his duties ... the minister shall forthwith appoint a new mediator-arbitrator and notify the parties of the name...." But in appointing a replacement arbitrator, "the minister may appoint a person who has no previous experience as an arbitrator," who "has not previously been or is not recognized as a person mutually acceptable" to both the union and the employer, "is not a member of a class of persons which has been ... recognized as comprising individuals who are mutually" acceptable to the union and the employer.

This legislation is abominable. It's astonishing. You don't even have to be an arbitrator to go and decide these matters. That's how important this government thinks our

children's education is. You don't even have to be mutually acceptable.

But there is something that is worth reading in this legislation because it exposes what's going on here. It says that when the arbitrator makes a decision—"consistency with Education Act and regulations... The mediator-arbitrator shall make an award that ... is consistent with the Education Act and the regulations" thereunder.

What does that mean? It says to us that the real problem all along here has been the funding formula. The funding formula is restrictive and the arbitrator will have to absolutely abide by the government's funding formula.

If you want a deal, and you want a deal tonight because the parties are still bargaining, put the \$16 million that you've taken from the Toronto board of education during the labour dispute, take it out of your pocket, give it back to the board so they can go to the table with it and you'll have a settlement by tonight. The same would apply in Windsor.

SMART GROWTH

Just a few words about Smart Growth. I searched in vain to find what the government was talking about in terms of smart growth in their statement. I see that they're going to sit down with municipalities and talk about putting new signs on the highways. Let me tell you why they need to do that. After the government unloaded all kinds of highways on to the municipalities, there is no consistency any more. You've created a horrendous problem. But that's not smart growth. That's just covering up your own mistake.

Next, the government wants to consult with coroners and emergency workers about how to clear highways after accidents. The priority should be to ensure that we have the rapid transit systems in place so that we have less accidents on our highways and our highways are less crowded. We don't see that, either.

The government plans to build seven new expressways, but they have no money for urban transit. That, by definition, is not smart growth. That, by definition, is making the problem worse. If you live in dense, urban areas, you have to devote time, attention and money to urban transit. It is the most efficient, the most cost-effective way to move a large number of people within urban areas. Yet the government talks about smart growth. It has no strategy, no plan for rapid transit; no plan, no strategy for urban transit. There is no smart growth here; there's just a buzz word, and underneath the buzz word, it's empty.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EDUCATION LABOUR DISPUTES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Education. Sadly, and

all too predictably, we find ourselves now in the face, once again, of strikes which are affecting thousands of Ontario schoolchildren. We have put forward a back-to-school plan which we are asking you now to consider. I outlined the details of the plan a few moments ago, but I think of real importance here is the fact that you've got some legislation that the Minister of Labour has tabled today. The third party is telling us that they intend to block or delay passage of that bill. That could mean that this bill would take up to a week to pass.

I've got a plan here to put schools—

Interjections.

Mr McGuinty: I've got a plan to get our kids back to school today. I won't be delaying passage of this bill. I won't be working to block passage of the bill. But I've got something here, Madam Minister, which can get our kids back to school today. Will you support our back-to-school plan?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): The honourable member knows we have already introduced legislation that will actually solve this particular dispute. With all due respect to the honourable member, we have been in this House not that long ago when his party did promise to support legislation to bring the students back in Hamilton-Wentworth, and that didn't come to pass.

The other thing is that we haven't seen the plan from the honourable member. We have shared our legislation with his party. But we know what his plan has done before. We've heard what he wants to do. When we want a stronger curriculum, he wants to weaken it. When we want standardized testing, he wants to stop that. When we are prepared to live with our financial responsibility, he wants to absolve all responsibility for the taxpayers' money and simply hand it to arbitrators. His solution for extracurriculars was to increase the students' workload to pay for the decrease in the teachers' workload. That's not an appropriate solution.

Mr McGuinty: Madam Minister, it would be nice if at some point during your part-time career as Minister of Education you devoted yourself to the interests of Ontario's schoolchildren. We are putting forward—and I'll ask you to speak to the matter which I've put forward today and just ease off on the rants. We're talking about an effort here to put schoolchildren back in their classes. That's what working families want us to do. You've got a couple of options on the table now. You've got legislation—and I understand that when the only tool in your toolbox is a hammer, every problem starts to look like a nail. I understand that's the way you people over there operate. But there's a better way to do this. We can resolve this today. We can have schoolchildren in Windsor and Toronto back to class today.

That's why we've tabled this plan. It's realistic, it is practical, it's fair and it's fast. I ask you once again, Madam Minister, will you, in the interests of our children, support this plan?

Hon Mrs Ecker: With all due respect to the honourable member, I'll stack my hours on my job up with his

any day, by the way. Secondly, this government has a plan for quality education in this province. It includes back-to-work legislation that we brought in today, which—I agree with the honourable member—could resolve it today, and we'll see what happens this afternoon. But our plan also consists of a good, strong curriculum to give our kids what they need, more money for the classrooms, a comprehensive teacher testing program, and student testing so we know how well our kids can do, so parents can actually have the information they need to make intelligent choices about their children. That is the plan we have put forward. That is the plan we have the courage to implement. We will continue to do what parents and students need to have done and want to have done in our education system in this province.

1440

Mr McGuinty: Minister, Ontario's working families understand the havoc you have wreaked in our public education system. You have robbed our children's teachers of their enthusiasm, you have sapped our schools of their spirit and you have taken away our children's extracurricular activities. We've got 60 work stoppages under the terms of the Mike Harris government. That is the record. That speaks for itself.

I'm asking you to do something today that is decidedly different. I'm asking you to act in the interests of Ontario's working families and their children. I'm asking you to support a plan that will get our children back to school today in Toronto and in Windsor. On behalf of those working families, Minister, why won't you support our plan today?

Hon Mrs Ecker: First of all, a resolution from the opposition leader—I'm sure he would know this—doesn't accomplish anything. Legislation, which this government is introducing, will accomplish something. It can resolve this strike if the members of this House support it.

Havoc is not higher standards. Havoc is not new curriculum. Comprehensive teacher testing, a code of conduct: those are the things parents want. Act in the interests of students? You didn't act in the interests of students in Hamilton-Wentworth. You didn't act in the interests of students when you said "Let's increase their workload to pay for a decrease in teacher workload." That's not in the interests of students either.

We're going to stick to the commitments we made to the taxpayers, to teachers, to students, to parents. Quality education reform, performance-based system, parental choice: those are things that the parents and the students want out there.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): Minister, you said that you're doing things in the interests of students probably 10 times in the last three minutes. I want all the members across to look right over here in the gallery. Right over here in the gallery are students, student trustees from across the province. They've had the misfortune to live with the double-edged rhetoric that is coming forward from your side of the House. So I want you to address those students today and I want you to address, in a way you avoided with my leader, another

proposition. I want you to address their message to you today about extracurricular activities in this province.

Minister, you're very bold to say that somehow we're going to put them at a disadvantage. What they've said about your plan today is that it would be a travesty. The students of this province, their elected representatives here today, have condemned the idea that you would enact the other part of Bill 74. I want you to stand up and tell them, are you going to enact the other part of Bill 74? If you're not, which solution—

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

Hon Mrs Ecker: With all due respect to the honourable member, I should really hope his research department was better than the front page of the Toronto Star.

No, we're not. We've had this discussion in this House before. This continued scaremongering does not help teachers, does not help students.

The reason we have student trustees is because this government thought it was so important to have students on school boards, to have their voice. I was at the founding meeting of the association of student trustees. I've met with them. They have official stakeholder status with our ministry. They are giving and will continue to give us advice on all of the education quality initiatives we are putting in place.

Extracurricular activities are exceedingly important for our students. But you know what, Mr Speaker? We've had disagreements with the education system under Liberal government, under NDP government, under Conservative government. Disagreements are not new. Taking those disagreements into the classroom is wrong and it's not fair to students. Those individuals who do it should stop it.

Mr Kennedy: Minister, sitting over here is Karl Baldauf, who's the president of the student trustees of this province. There are representatives from school boards around the province. They sit in those classrooms when they aren't affected by the other misery you're inflicting on them, and they're the ones who want to know, 245 days into the school year, what is your solution? You have taken extracurricular activities away from them. You have, Minister. Last year, 70 of 72 boards had them, except for the two boards that cover your area. This year your staffing plan has caused them to go missing.

Minister, four months ago we gave you a peace plan. It has been approved by trustees, it has been approved by students, it has been approved by teacher federations, it has been approved by parents. Today there were minimum guidelines given to you by the student trustees. Your ministry staff were there to listen to them. Will you stand in the House today and guarantee to those students that what they say is in their interests—those minimum guidelines—will be met, and will you tell them the date you're going to meet them on for a solution to extracurricular activities?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I think the terms, the comments the student trustees made today, the conditions are very good. I've read them; I've heard them. I think they are

excellent conditions. But what has taken away extra-curricular activities from some of those students where this has occurred is the work to rule by some individuals in our schools.

The opposition likes to talk about the task force report, which I have said is good and has good solid recommendations. We're doing the work to look at moving forward with those recommendations. But where are they on the recommendations that said the union should stop penalizing teachers who are doing extracurricular activities? I don't hear the Liberal Party expressing any support for that particular recommendation from our task force.

Mr Kennedy: You have one last chance. There are students here today. At the beginning of this year you were asked. You were given the chance. We said, "Take the cover page off our plan." Even before that, other groups said to you that there would be trouble, there would be problems. You were initiating it. You were asked—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Would the member for Beaches-East York come to order. As you know, you try to get down to that last question. We're not going to get to it if I have to stand up. I stopped the clock. We're going to continue.

The member for Parkdale-High Park.

Mr Kennedy: Minister, in your last response you broke one of their principles, which is to say these things need to happen peacefully. They need your urgent action. They want you to solve things in time for next fall.

You have refused to be the Minister of Education, to say you will take charge of this problem, that you will put one proposal on the table that you agree with that will fix things. You can't blame everybody else, surely, every single one of the 245 days since you took away extra-curricular activities. Give these students today a commitment of something specific that you will do to solve this problem, to guarantee there will be extracurricular activities, if not in time for the rest of this year, which we would certainly hope, at least for next year, which requires you to act right away.

Hon Mrs Ecker: With all due respect to the honourable member, there are several proposals on the table. The task force did a good job of putting many recommendations on the table for consulting with the partners. They've given that to our government. We are looking at those recommendations and, as I said, I think some of them are very good.

Let's also be very clear. They talk about their so-called plan, which are the proposals the union had brought forward earlier. I appreciate that they want to put solutions on the table, and we all appreciate that you were doing that. But as I've said before, the difficulty with that plan—the students have not said they support your plan; the students have said they want long-term, sustainable, workable solutions. You were asking the students to increase their workload, for them to pay for a decrease in teacher workload. That's not the solution either. Those students deserve a solution. They deserve their extracurricular activities that have been denied

because of a work-to-rule campaign. I don't agree with that. I think it's unfair to the kids. I also think it's unfair when political disputes and labour disputes—

The Speaker: Order. I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

HYDRO RATES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Energy. This is information from your own ministry's Web site. One of the things it points out is that today, even after your 8% rate increase, people in Detroit who consume electrical power pay 60% more than people in Toronto.

Your government says you're going to sell off Ontario's hydroelectric system to private companies. Minister, if you were at one of those private companies and you then could decide where you were going to sell the power, would you sell the power in Toronto for 60% less or would you sell it in Detroit for 60% more?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): There is a requirement in the Energy Competition Act of 1998 that this Legislature passed that the people of Ontario be looked after first. The government has appointed an independent market operator to ensure that's done.

Furthermore, and I've answered this for the honourable member before, it's physically impossible to transmit any more than a fifth of the daily power, the electricity, in this province. There just aren't enough wires in the United States, and by the way, the electrons go both ways. So although there's enough wire there for 4,000 megawatts of power in a 20,000 megawatt day, at any given time half the power's going this way because it goes back and forth all day.

So you couldn't physically sell enough power to the United States to put a dent in the price in our market at this point in history.

1450

Mr Hampton: This Web site also provides other interesting information, because as you're preparing to sell off our hydroelectricity system, you are actually building more transmission lines to the United States. Your own Web site points that out, that you are increasing the capacity right now to take Ontario's electricity and sell it into the United States.

My point remains the same: if a company can get 60% more by selling the power in Detroit, or 72% more by selling it in Boston or 145% more by selling it in New York city, and you yourself said the other day that once these power stations are sold off to private companies they're in a free market, what are you going to do, Minister, to stop them from selling the power in the United States and to stop them from saying to Ontario consumers, "If you want power, you pay the same the price we're getting in Detroit or Boston or New York"? What are you going to do to stop that?

Hon Mr Wilson: It is the Ontario Energy Board, headed by the Honourable Floyd Laughren, who has ordered that additional wires be built into the United

States. It wasn't the government. It's for reliability purposes. One only has to remember the ice storm of three years ago, where we needed power from the United States. Power goes back and forth all the time. The honourable member may want to know that millions of dollars are made each year after Ontarians are looked after. Millions of dollars are made each year, by the old Ontario Hydro and now Ontario Power Generation, in flowing electricity, when it's appropriate, to the United States. It's called excess electricity in Ontario. We don't need it.

When you're running nuclear plants and they're running well, they have to run full out. That's the way a Candu reactor works. It takes months to shut down. It's not like flicking a switch on and off. So when you're running them and the Power Workers Union is doing a good job pumping out that electricity, why not make millions of dollars and help pay off the debt your party did nothing about?

Mr Hampton: Here goes the Minister of Energy trying to change his story again. You acknowledged yesterday that we've been paying debt charges at Hydro for some years, so don't try to change the story again.

The issue is this: once you have created a market for international energy corporations, you will not be able to tell them what price they can sell their power at and where they can sell it. California tried to do that. After opening up the market, they tried to say to energy corporations, "You must sell power here and you must sell it at this price." You know what happened in California. Are you going to try to repeat that mistake too, Minister?

Hon Mr Wilson: You know, you totally lost me in that argument. We're not California. You can just stop making the comparisons because not one you've made in the last three days has anything to do with Ontario. You're trying to stretch some sort of facts. We're not California and we're not deregulating the market like California.

Our problem is we've got lots of power, unlike California and Alberta. We've got one company that produces 90% of that power. It has no competition. It's cost has never been checked. People have never been able to buy green power. There's never been any choice and we think consumers deserve choice. They deserve to get out of the malaise of power generation in this province and the sins of the monopoly of the past, and to move forward, build new plants and not tax their grandchildren by putting them further and further into debt like what happened over the last several decades with the old electricity system in this province. We're not going down that road any more. We have a positive new era in electricity. Wake up. The private sector is asking and consumers are asking us to open the market as soon as we can.

EDUCATION LABOUR DISPUTES

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): He's a funny guy. My question is to the Minister of Education.

Madame, why are you jumping on the strike now, when the two sides are so close to deal? I think, Minister—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Stop the clock. Come to order. Sorry for the interruption, member.

Mr Marchese: Well, Minister, you either know that they're negotiating or don't know—and if you don't know, it's worse. But I'm assuming, since you've got so many staff, that you know they're negotiating and that they're very close. I believe a solution is within reach, I do, and we all want to see the kids go back into the classroom. My question to you, Madame, is, why are you sabotaging a negotiated end to the strike?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): I refer this to the Minister of Labour.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): We've been in contact with the negotiating parties, obviously, and have tried to keep abreast of the situation. The situation is fairly clear. The school board has taken the position that they are not in negotiations. One of the union officials has suggested that there has been an offer that has floated back to the school boards. The school boards considered the offer to be not significant and in fact not truly an offer that was worthy of further consideration.

So from all conversations that we've had, we have been informed that there are not meaningful negotiations taking place and there isn't meaningful opportunity to settle the strike in the very near future. I think any reasonable and responsible government at this point in time, with the thought of the parents and children in mind, would take this position of introducing legislation to protect the school year and protect those children who are trying to get through their school year in a timely fashion. So if you're suggesting there's meaningful legislation and they're this close to a deal, the only one who appears to be suggesting that is you, my friend.

Mr Marchese: The only suggestion I want to make to you is that I see your government arrogantly standing in the way of a possible solution here. There is a golden opportunity for you here to be accountable in a different way and that is that both in Toronto and in Windsor efforts are being made to negotiate a deal. I'm saying to you, get out of the way so that negotiation can take place in good faith. My question is, can you do that?

Hon Mr Stockwell: With great respect, we have not been involved in either of these negotiations, one being five weeks and the other being four or five weeks. Without any movement by this Legislature—and apparently with the opposition of your caucus, which will extend the period of time for which the children will be out, causing concern for the children and the parents. The action needed to be taken because if we don't get co-operation from this whole House, it's going to take a number of days to pass this piece of legislation.

Now, I understand that your House leader is very proud of this. I find it reprehensible and you should be ashamed, because there is no close deal in place here. If there were, we wouldn't be involved. So to make the

suggestion to the public out there that they're close to a deal is both unfair and impractical. Furthermore, to stand in the way of children going back to school after four and five weeks of strike is beyond reprehensible. You should be ashamed and you should support this bill and pass it in 15 minutes. That's the responsible act to take.

NORTHERN MEDICAL SCHOOL

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, I'd like to ask you a specific question related to the creation of a medical school in northern Ontario. While all of us would like to believe that your announcement yesterday meets the goals of the proposal put forward by Lakehead and Laurentian universities, there are some legitimate concerns being expressed as a result of your statement in the House, as well as comments made by the Premier yesterday.

Minister, your strong emphasis on e-learning—
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Stop the clock. If the member for Beaches-East York and the Minister of Labour want to carry on this conversation, do it outside. I can't hear. You're yelling across at each other. If you want to do it, go in the back and talk to each other. You can yell all you want at each other. You have loud voices and I can't hear. He's less than 20 feet away and I can't hear him.

Sorry, go ahead.

1500

Mr Gravelle: Minister, we have some legitimate concerns we'd like you to clarify, if you could. Your strong emphasis on e-learning, as well as the Premier's comments about the importance of Internet-based technology, leads some of us to question whether this school will be a free-standing, independent institution. In addition, your remarks yesterday that the medical school will be on a site or sites suggests you may not be committed to the co-location of the institution at Lakehead and Laurentian universities. Therefore, my question is, does your commitment to a northern medical school mean you are accepting and will implement the proposal put forward by Lakehead and Laurentian universities, and specifically, will you confirm that Lakehead University in Thunder Bay will be one of the sites for the medical school?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I thank the honourable member for the question. Indeed, yesterday was an historic day for medical education and for remedying the physician shortage in Ontario. I think we can take pride in the fact that yesterday's announcement was all about this government making an important decision and saying we will go ahead.

The honourable member is asking for some details. I caution the honourable member that Rome wasn't built in a day. We want to get the kind of detail from the community as well as from the medical education experts. I can tell you that the response thus far has been very

positive. My point of view is that it goes beyond a virtual school—I know that was the concern of the honourable member the other day, and other honourable members as well. This is more than a virtual school. It needs a site or sites. We are quite looking forward to conversing with Laurentian, Lakehead, Windsor and all other interested post-secondary sectors to get their proposals on how to do it best.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): You've had the proposal from the north for a long time. I know, and I'm sure, you would have done a business impact study before making this announcement, because that's your government's rhetoric. So could you please provide some more details to the people of northern Ontario? Would you please stand in your place today and tell the people in northern Ontario how many capital dollars you have allocated to this project, and will you stand in your place and assure the people of Sudbury that the bricks and mortar of the medical school you're talking about—one part of it—will be located in Sudbury at Laurentian University?

Stand in your place right now and say "yes" to that question, give us a capital dollar amount, and do you know what? I'll pop the champagne cork.

Hon Mr Clement: I'm very pleased to stand in my place today and say that the priority of the Mike Harris government is for more medical students, more family physicians, more specialists for rural and northern areas. That is our priority, and I stand in my place proud of that.

If the honourable member wishes to know what Sudbury thinks of this, I would like to quote Jim Gordon, who is chair of the Northern Ontario Mayors' Coalition and mayor of the city of Greater Sudbury, who said, "We commend Premier Mike Harris and his cabinet for this historic decision. ... Today, I want to thank the province for demonstrating its commitment to northern Ontario.... Having Premier Harris, a son of the north, support this school makes a powerful statement." I couldn't have said it better myself.

SMART GROWTH

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. The phrase "smart growth" was launched by the Premier in January, and you made an extensive statement earlier today. I guess what I'm looking for is, what exactly will it mean to the people of my riding and our city of Brampton, and who will you be talking to?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): It's a very good question, and I know the member is keenly interested in this. Our vision is a pro-growth plan that builds on the principles our party has had for 40 or 50 years from leaders such as Drew and Frost. They thought more in terms of long-term planning for the province and what we need in terms of infrastructure and policies to attract and maintain growth and, at the same time, improve our standard and quality of life in the province. That's what has made this a great province to live in.

So we're undertaking consultations to implement this vision with a strategy based on what we hear from the people of Ontario around more choices for people, around co-ordinating levels of government in municipalities, listening to their concerns and their solutions, and encompassing that into a strategy that will deliver results.

Mr Spina: Minister, you spoke about the phenomenal growth that's been experienced in our area and around Ontario and the projections into the future. Nobody faces the problem of growth more than those of us in the 905 belt, and particularly in Brampton. Members of the opposition talk about what Bill Davis did. He committed Highway 410. The Liberals started it but, like a lot of their initiatives, it was only half finished. In fact, Highway 410 right now is euphemistically referred to as 205 because it's only half finished. The NDP in five years in office never did a thing to it.

So as a result of some of the issues in our area—the incompleteness of Highway 410, the choking off of Highway 7—the gridlock is killing the commuters who are coming from Brampton, through Brampton and from Peel to the core of Toronto and back.

How can my constituents' concerns be heard and considered in your plans for Smart Growth?

Hon Mr Hodgson: It's true that we have experienced a lot of growth under the leadership of Mike Harris because of tax cuts or removing barriers to economic growth and we're seeing some of the pressures that more people and more growth have on a province that hasn't been actively planning for the future since, as you mentioned, the corridor of the 410, planned in the late 1950s, early 1960s, and the 407, planned in the late 1960s, early 1970s. It takes time to protect these corridors and we must think ahead beyond the next election, about 10, 15 years out.

Your constituents should contact our ministry. We will be having regional consultation meetings with myself and with my parliamentary assistant and other members of the government and our ministry. We're opening up a Web site where they can contact and add to the discussion.

The Liberals want to reinvest the urban planners' dream of the 1950s, where experts come in and tell people how and where they should live and what choices they should make. We believe in consulting with ordinary working families of this province to get their ideas on how we, as a government, can work for them in implementing their choice on where they work and what mode of transportation they take and making sure that the infrastructure—

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

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): My question is to the Deputy Premier. I don't see him, though.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Stop the clock, if you could, just for a quick moment. Here he comes. We'll just give him a second. I think he can hear you now.

Ms Di Cocco: Thank you, Speaker. My question is actually quite straightforward, and it is to the Deputy Premier. It's regarding cabinet office. I understand it's the central agency that supports the Premier and cabinet and it also provides administrative support to the office of the Premier and other organizational units.

What I found incredible, and you talk about smaller government, more efficient government, is that the cabinet office costs have more than doubled since 1995. The cost in 1995 was \$7,858,149.00; the cost in 2000 was \$15,816,386.00, and these are actuals. I'd like to know why the operational costs of cabinet office have more than doubled and every other sector of this province has been nicked and dined to death for the last six years.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I thank the member opposite for the question. In terms of the size of government, I'm sure the member knows that today in the government of Ontario we have fewer ministers and fewer political staff and at less cost to the taxpayer than in the previous, NDP government. The NDP government had five more ministers, with 15% more staff than we have now. Just before the election in June 1995 the previous government had 29 ministers and 352 political staff, compared to our current 24 ministers with 303 staff.

1510

Ms Di Cocco: In 1995, when the Legislature had 130 members, the extra cost for cabinet ministers and parliamentary assistants and the Premier was almost \$752,000. In March of this year, the cost of your cabinet ministers and their parliamentary assistants is \$1,103,488, and we have a smaller Legislature. These are facts and figures. How do you explain one rule for the rest of the province and one rule for your cabinet offices and for your ministers?

Hon Mr Flaherty: I can tell the member opposite that during the budget preparation process we're in now and the business plan process that all the ministries are going through, we look, of course, at the size of the provincial public service, at the full-time employees in the provincial public service. There will be a budget on May 9 and we'll address some of those issues there, as you know.

In terms of political staff, the NDP in 1994-95 budgeted over \$18 million for political staff. Last year our government spent 27% less than that, even before you factor in inflation. So in terms of political staff, we certainly have instituted substantial savings in the government of Ontario.

EDUCATION LABOUR DISPUTES

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): My question is directed to the labour minister and it concerns the school board strikes. Last Friday morning I had a

meeting with four women, four young mothers from my constituency, two of whom are getting near to graduation from Humber College, one in robotics. One young mother has two children. The purpose of their meeting was to come and talk to us about the problems they were facing regarding the closure of the schools, particularly with the Toronto District School Board. They pleaded with me to see if we could come up with a solution, because in the one case—

Laughter.

Mr Hastings: It may be a laughing matter to the member from Fort York, but at least I'd like to know from the minister the specific provisions in the legislation and why we are taking this drastic set of actions at this time, in response particularly to these constituents in my riding.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): I thank the member for Etobicoke. We've experienced the same thing in my riding as well. I know members in Windsor and Toronto have expressed the same concerns to me.

Obviously we would rather see a collective agreement. The vast majority of agreements are collectively negotiated. When you're put in a situation where you have people out on strike for four and five weeks and you have closed schools, you have to make a decision. That decision is detailed legislation that orders people back to work.

It can't be a resolution; it can't be a motion; it has to be legislation. You can come into this House with resolutions like the Leader of the Opposition that accomplish absolutely nothing—it is completely meaningless, absolutely no substance at all—or you can act decisively, show some leadership, protect parents, teachers and in fact students, like this government has done, and legislate people back to work to protect the taxpayers of this province, not resolutions which do nothing.

Mr Hastings: My follow-up is a supplementary. I implore our friends in the New Democratic Party to look at the crucial nature of what is happening in the Toronto schools and to look at how this is adversely impacting working families in Toronto and in Windsor. Why won't they support this legislation instead of dragging it out for two more weeks? Minister, it may even end up jeopardizing the graduation plans of these two young mothers who want to get back to work in this province.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Obviously the question is spot on; it's exactly right. I remember being in this House when the members of the NDP ordered the Windsor school board back to work without even getting a jeopardy ruling. When they were in government, they didn't worry about getting jeopardy. They just ordered people back to work.

I've been in this House when we got the Liberals across the floor telling us, "We will give back-to-work legislation in Hamilton-Wentworth speedy passage."

Interjection: What did they do?

Hon Mr Stockwell: What does that mean? They voted against the bill when it came here.

You've got to show some leadership in this place. You've got to do the right thing. Sometimes the right thing means legislating individuals back to work for the benefit of parents and students.

To answer you, member for Etobicoke, we need to show direction. We have given that direction. This is not a resolution, it's action. I can only presume, since they promised to support the last bill and voted against it, that they must be opposed to this one and they'll vote for it.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Yesterday at the Walkerton inquiry, the former ministry officials clearly identified that after 1995 your government told Ministry of the Environment enforcement officers not to enforce the law. It was shocking to find out that you said, "Back off. Don't enforce the law any more. Don't do any inspections." But what's even more shocking is that you spent \$800,000 on the Gibbons report to try to dress up your cuts to the Ministry of the Environment and make it sound as if somehow it was new policy.

It's pretty clear that the people of Ontario want you to enforce environmental laws and want a Ministry of the Environment that is capable of enforcing environmental laws. What are you going to do to make sure that happens?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of the Environment): I agree with the leader of the third party. It is extremely important that we have a very strong enforcement presence in Ontario, because it does act as a deterrent to non-compliant industry. I would like you to know that, since 1999, the government has hired more than 130 new enforcement and investigative-related staff to ensure protection of health and the environment. The number of charges laid in 2000 increased by 25% from 1999, and the fines issued in 2000 were more than \$2.6 million, a 74% increase from 1999. We have a new, tough environmental penalties act, and we are moving forward with very strong enforcement measures.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): That's all very well, but seven people died under your watch, and you started to put a little bit of what you took away back into the ministry in 1999.

I want to get back to the Gibbons report. What it says is, "Don't worry so much about prosecuting polluters." It sets the stage to weaken the ministry even further and to privatize our water and sewer systems. It further justifies your plan to cut the environmental budget next month. You even had to bring in an outsider to write this report, because no self-respecting environmental enforcement person at your ministry would do it, given the cuts and deregulation you've done already.

So, Minister, stand up today and tell us you will reject this nonsense of the Gibbons report and build up the budget and the resources in the ministry so it can do its

job and protect the environment and the people of this province.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I'm extremely disappointed that the member would characterize Ms Gibbons in the way she has. She is a highly respected former deputy minister. Her report has been extremely well received. It talks about a new vision for the environment, one where we all work co-operatively in an interministerial manner. It talks about moving beyond minimum standards into continuous improvement. It talks about moving forward with partnerships with all the stakeholders in this province. I can assure you that report will be implemented by our government and you will see there will be tremendous improvements. In fact, we will have the best Ministry of the Environment anywhere.

1520

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): My question would be best answered by the Premier, but I will direct it to the Chair of Management Board, who was—but there's no one—

Interjection.

Mr Crozier: Well, I'm not starting it. The Chair of Management Board was here.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Stop the clock. Don't start that stuff. It's a back way of getting around to it. When you start that, you lead on. Just ask the question. You know the ministers are here. You can look across, you can see them, you can say, "He's here, he's here, he's here." So that's the answer. Don't get around it by doing that, because it'll start on the other side. You know you can't mention attendance in here, and I'm not going to put up with it. You got around it the other way. Don't tell me that. I sat here and heard what you said. You were trying to get around to, "I'd like to ask it to the Premier and I have to ask it to somebody else." We know what you're trying to do, and I'm saying to you don't do it or you won't ask the question, because you'll be named. Member for Essex.

Mr Crozier: Recently, N. Scott White was appointed as chair of the Ontario Realty Board Corp. Mr White was vice-chair of Colliers International, a multinational real estate firm that donated more than \$30,000 to the Tory party since you came to office.

It seems that Mr White has friends in high places. I asked Mr White if he asked for the appointment. He said, "Blake Wallace was the one who suggested to me and then asked me if I would allow my name to stand for consideration to this appointment." As we all know, Blake Wallace is a well-known Tory insider, friend of the Premier and an Adams mine lobbyist.

My question to the minister is this: why is an unelected, unaccountable party insider like Blake Wallace arranging an appointment that is this important? Is that accountability?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): First of all, there's a real

difference between getting some information on the positions available as opposed to some sort of decision-making, which is not done. That's why there's a process in place where any of these appointees are accountable to a committee of the Legislature, which, I must say, the members of the opposition certainly are part of. They have an opportunity at that time to indicate their concerns, and quite frankly there's a very important process that goes through.

Having said that, if we look at the ORC, the ORC has a mandate right now to bring a lot more professionalism into what they're doing to make sure there's a lot more accountability. Frankly, this is what is happening throughout the whole process, whether it's the pool of qualified brokers through to management. That's why it's very important for this process to be very public. As the member knows, it is very public, and certainly the member knows that the opposition had a chance to ask questions as well.

Mr Crozier: When Mr White told us about Blake Wallace's involvement, we were looking forward to asking Mr Wallace directly about his involvement in this process. Unfortunately, after we learned of this involvement the government decided to withdraw his appointment—being Mr Wallace's to the McMichael board—so we wouldn't have a chance to question him.

We on this side of the House believe the government appointments should be given the utmost respect. This means that appointments should not be subverted by individuals who are not accountable to the Legislature, and we know that Blake Wallace has been responsible for at least one appointment but do not know how deep this goes. We've seen the ORC rocked by scandal and cronyism, and this doesn't seem to restore any accountability. I would like to ask the minister to tell us if Blake Wallace has made any other decisions affecting Management Board appointments?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: The subject of the question is Mr Scott White, who went through the process. Clearly there was a process that we all agree upon, all sit upon, all members of this Legislature. It's one thing to be able to hear about a position being available—in fact perhaps the question to be asked, then, is, how did someone like Gilles Morin hear about the position when he was appointed to the Ontario Highway Transport Board, or Bernard Grandmaître, who was appointed to the Assessment Review Board, or Frank Micalash, for another example, who was appointed a full-time member of the Social Benefits Tribunal? I'm sure he heard about these positions from some of his colleagues. I would gather that they didn't have much of a say in terms of the actual decision, other than going through the process of committee, but that's why the process is here. The accountability is clearly to the Legislature; that's why we have the committees. The process is one we all support. Quite frankly, we're talking about Mr White here. Is he concerned about someone who wasn't appointed?

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

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FINANCING

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): My question is for the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation. As you know, many of the recreation, culture and tourism facilities in the province are in need of repair, upgrades and even expansion, but for many small communities such as several in my riding the tax base is simply not large enough to fund major infrastructure. People in my riding tell me these facilities are important to them and essential to their communities. What are we doing to protect these facilities that are badly in need of repair?

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation): I want to thank the member for Perth-Middlesex for the question. Not only is he an outstanding Speaker, but he is working hard, obviously, for the constituents in Perth-Middlesex.

I had the chance to visit St Marys, Stratford and Milverton in the member's riding just this past week. He had a tour that he took me on of the Milverton Arena, which is one such project he refers to in his riding, an arena that I think is about 50 years old. I'm pleased the people of Milverton are investing in this new program, the \$300-million sports, culture and tourism partnership, a record, an innovative program of the Mike Harris government to invest in health and safety issues as well as to renew and rebuild our infrastructure and tourism attractions, sport and recreational facilities such as arenas, rec centres, art galleries, theatres etc. The Mike Harris government knows full well, understands and supports the key role these investments will make in communities like those in Perth-Middlesex.

Mr Johnson: Minister, as you know, there is a committee of some eight or 10 members in Perth East who have been meeting regularly over the last months, and they were ever so glad to have the opportunity to meet with you last weekend.

I agree that this program will help communities improve some of their most important infrastructure, but I understand that the demand for SuperBuild sports, culture and recreation funding is very high. Some organizations in my riding that have applied to the program are wondering whether they will be successful. Could you inform the House about the process for this particular program? Specifically, my constituents would like to know how their projects will be evaluated, given the demand for funding.

Hon Mr Hudak: Not only do I want to thank the member for Perth-Middlesex, but also Mayor McTavish, Grant Whittington, Jeff Erwin and Audrey Nicholson and some other concerned citizens who told me about the importance of this investment to their community. Certainly Milverton, like many others, is very excited about participating in the sports, culture and tourism partnership, the \$300-million Mike Harris investment.

It's open to health and safety issues, as I mentioned, for municipalities as well as provincially important tourism and such attractions. No doubt because of this

excitement the Mike Harris government is provoking in communities across Ontario, there are a lot of people interested in participating. Only the best projects are going to qualify for this program. It's important for the projects to demonstrate the importance to the community, the business impact on the community and the participation of partnerships. Try to be innovative in working with businesses in the community, community groups and municipalities, because we're looking forward to maximizing our investment in Ontario for sports, culture and tourism.

HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): My question is to the Minister of Health. For the last two years my riding has had bad experiences with privatization of radiology services. DiagnostiCare Inc, the private company from Alberta that bought up and operates these clinics in my riding, is holding our doctors and constituents hostage. In the letters I have here with me today, the company has clearly stated that due to government clawbacks, their bottom line has suffered to the point that they are once again planning on closing down the Rockland, Plantagenet and Clarence Creek offices. That is after having already closed the Alfred clinic. These closures would be disastrous to our communities. Doctors would leave the area. Patients would suffer, as we don't have any public transportation to the larger centres.

I ask you, Minister, what are you prepared to do to ensure that the people of Glengarry-Prescott-Russell are provided with X-rays, ultrasound and other radiology services?

1530

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Certainly I'll take the honourable member's question under advisement. If he can provide me with some details, I'd be happy to do some further research. I can say generally, on a couple of fronts, of course one of the things we have been concerned about and had an excellent dialogue with the federal government on was the state of medical equipment in Ontario. I'm pleased to report to this House that an agreement was reached a few weeks ago with the federal government and money has started to flow in terms of diagnostic equipment and other forms of medical equipment.

In terms of cancer care and its investments, I can again say to this House that the taxpayers' dollars flowing to cancer care investments here in Ontario have multiplied and have increased by more than 40% since the start of our investments in this area as a government. So if there's a particular problem, I'd be happy to deal with it.

Mr Lalonde: Since DiagnosticCare bought up these clinics, X-ray services have been reduced, and in some areas ultrasound services were completely eliminated. Due to the lack of public transportation in my riding, I am concerned that many people who require X-rays will

not get them because of their inability to travel to Ottawa. The equipment is not a factor.

DiagnosticCare suggests in their letter of April 2 this year that in order for them to continue operations and also to meet their bottom line, the local doctors in their search for funding should request a subsidy, as it may be more attractive and could then be used as leverage with government to guarantee that radiology services continue in their communities.

I ask you, Minister, do you think this is the way our health services should be operated, with threats? Once again, what can you do to ensure that the people of my riding are provided with these necessary services?

Hon Mr Clement: The answer is clearly no, I don't think the health care system should be operated on a series of threats, although that has never stopped some people before. Certainly that's not the way it should go. It should go on the basis of need. It should go on the basis of the best care delivered in the community, and that's what we stand for on this side of the House. That's why for each and every year of the Mike Harris government the health care dollars invested by this government has gone up; indeed it has gone up by 27% over the last five years.

If the honourable member has a particular problem in his constituency, then we can deal with that. But the numbers don't lie. It is clearly an area of the highest priority of the Mike Harris government, and it will continue to be so.

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): My question is for the Attorney General. On March 22, the Globe and Mail published an article stating that the Law Society of Upper Canada is considering a very disturbing proposed rule of professional conduct. If adopted, this rule would allow defence lawyers to conceal physical evidence relevant to a crime from authorities if it could play a valuable strategic role at trial and if turning this evidence over to authorities would reduce this strategic value. For example, Bernardo lawyer Ken Murray's suppression of videotapes showing the torture of Kristen French and Leslie Mahaffy would become legitimate if this proposed rule of professional conduct were passed.

Attorney General, my constituents in Scarborough Centre are appalled by this and want to know what measures would be taken to seek justice for victims.

Applause.

Hon David Young (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I thank my colleagues and I thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank the member for Scarborough Centre for what is a very important question. I must tell you that I share her concern. It is a very legitimate concern on a very important issue. Frankly, the proposed rule—and I want to emphasize it is a proposed rule—is unacceptable. I expressed that view to the treasurer of the law society and to other senior officials from the law society shortly after the rule was tabled.

Frankly, it's my hope that representatives of the law society will reconsider this matter—I have some indication to believe that they will do so—because it would be inappropriate for this rule to be passed in its current form.

I will say as well, before I take my seat again, that I would encourage all members of the Legislature who have received similar calls from their constituents or—

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

Ms Mushinski: Minister, I'm delighted to see that you share my view and the view of my constituents that this proposed rule is unacceptable. Since 1995 the Mike Harris government has proven time and again that it stands firmly on the side of victims of crime and their families. Despite the opposition of some groups, some of which of course come from the other side of this House, the Mike Harris government continues to ensure that victims have a voice in our justice system.

Minister, can you remind this House about the important initiatives that the Mike Harris government has adopted on behalf—

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon Mr Young: Shortly after this government took office in 1995, we came forward with a series of measures, a series of initiatives that were somewhat unprecedented throughout the country and in fact Ontario remains one of the first and only jurisdictions to have passed legislation that entrenches the protection of victims. You will undoubtedly recall the Victims' Bill of Rights which passed in 1995. Most recently we've come forward to entrench and make permanent the Office for Victims of Crime. That office will ensure that that bill of rights is enforced throughout.

In addition, in the last fiscal year, 2000-01, our government is very proud to say that we spent \$135 million on no less than 40 programs, all of which will assist victims across this province.

NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT SUPPLEMENT

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, every month your government takes money away from the poorest of our children. These children are supposed to get about \$100 a month back from the national child tax benefit supplement, but you've clawed back dollar for dollar from children whose families are on Ontario Works and on the Ontario disabilities support program. This is wrong. That's why I'm leading a campaign to stop this clawback. I'm asking you today to make quick work of my campaign and tell the people of Ontario that you'll stop taking this money away from our most vulnerable children. Would you do that today, Minister?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for children, minister responsible for francophone affairs): This government has done a lot to try to improve the lives of

children in this province. One of the things that we're committed to do is not just to provide supports to help people move from welfare to work, but to do more for those real heroes in our society, those working families with low and modest incomes for whom government has traditionally done very little, to give and encourage an attachment to the labour force. That's why the national child benefit supplement was designed by the Harris government and Jean Chrétien, all 100 of his Liberal MPs. I'm so very pleased to tell you that the member for Don Valley East's mother supports this policy each and every day and she votes for it.

It was designed by the government to encourage attachment to the labour force. Jane Stewart, the Minister of Human Resources Development, said, "What we are trying to do is build a platform so that there is incentive to work." Pierre Pettigrew, the then minister, said, "We are trying to reduce and eventually eliminate the welfare wall. Too many families are in the welfare trap. Families on welfare will never be really rich. It's a job that's key." That's what this government has designed to do, to provide an incentive, to encourage attachment to the labour force.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The time for question period is over.

EDUCATION LABOUR DISPUTES

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: notwithstanding standing order 69(a), I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion to consider second and third reading debate of a bill entitled An Act to resolve labour disputes respecting the Toronto District School Board and the Windsor-Essex Catholic District Board.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would then request unanimous consent to begin second reading of the same act immediately following routine proceedings today, in order to begin second reading of that aforementioned bill.

1540

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

Hon Mr Stockwell: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Considering that there was not unanimous consent, the NDP opposing us on second reading starting after routine proceedings, may I then seek the unanimous consent of this House to begin second readings after the dinner break tonight so we can begin second readings on the bill to put children first and get them back to school.

The Speaker: Unfortunately, or maybe fortunately, depending on how you feel about it, the House isn't sitting tonight. You need a motion for that.

Interjection.

The Speaker: OK, we'll start with that. Unanimous—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Wait until I've finished. I'm betting on the answer.

Is there unanimous consent to sit tonight? No. So we therefore can't do it. I heard some noes, unfortunately.

AIR QUALITY IN LEGISLATURE

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: My point of order concerns the atmosphere in this House in terms of the humidity and the heat. What I would like to request of the Speaker is whether he could ascertain why it is, year in and year out—

Interjections.

Mr Hastings: If the folks from the New Democrats want to leave, that's their privilege.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I can't hear the member. I did receive a notice that he did want to bring this up; he sent me a handwritten note. To tell you the truth, I thought he was kidding about it. But on a point of order, the member for Etobicoke North.

Mr Hastings: I would request that the Speaker undertake an investigation to determine why we cannot have cool facilities in this whole precinct—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Where's my wrench? The member for Niagara Centre on the same point of order.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: If I could be of assistance to the Speaker and to the member, perhaps if you removed your tie and doffed your jacket, you'd be a little cooler and more comfortable.

Interjections.

The Speaker: It may be the same point of order, I don't know.

Interjection: It's not the same.

The Speaker: OK. A point of order, and then I'll reply.

Mr Hastings: Our friends in the socialist line may consider this a facetious request, but I would outline that we wear ties normally in respect of and for decorum in this place.

Interjections.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Speaker, I just want to seek assistance to let me know if the government's on a filibuster this afternoon. I'm wondering if they're trying to slow the House down.

The Speaker: All of you should try wearing this wool robe and see what it's like in here. In fact, I would tell you it has been hot after the last few days, and I got back last night and both my wife and I have a touch of the flu and I actually had a temperature. I thought it was hot in here because of the heat and the wool garments that I wear. It turned out I had a little touch of the flu, so it has been extremely hot.

Having said that, the problem with this system is that we have a very old building. We do, I am pleased to inform you, have—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Be very quiet so we can hear. I know we're having a little bit of fun, but the member does want to hear.

We do have some plans to improve it, which will be brought in our capital plan, and the member may want to speak to the Board of Internal Economy. It will take some money. If he's not familiar, we will give him the names of the people on the Board of Internal Economy. We have some things that we would like to do in terms of health and safety in this building, but it will take some money to do that.

So I suggest that the member for Etobicoke North speak with the government House leader and the members of the Board of Internal Economy. We also have the capital plan that we can bring in tomorrow at the table if you will come down and take a look at it. I would encourage all members who feel the way I do—this is a lovely, lovely building, a historical building, but it does need some work to upgrade it into the next century. We have some plans to do that, and so I'm hoping that the members of the board will encourage all the members to support the plan.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a more serious matter: in light of the fact that the NDP have not given consent for the government's bill, I seek unanimous consent to debate Mr McGuinty's resolution, which will bring the kids in Windsor and Toronto back to school tomorrow.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? No.

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which reads as follows:

"Whereas many residents of St Catharines and other communities in Ontario are unable to find a family doctor as a result of the growing doctor shortage we have experienced during the tenure of the Harris government;

"Whereas cancer patients in Ontario requiring radiation treatment face unacceptable delays and are often forced to travel to the United States to receive medical attention;

"Whereas many prescription drugs which would help patients with a variety of medical conditions such as macular degeneration, multiple sclerosis, arthritis, diabetes and heart failure are not covered by OHIP;

"Whereas many assistive devices that could aid patients in Ontario are not eligible for funding from the Ontario Ministry of Health;

"Whereas community care access centres have inadequate funding to carry out their responsibilities for long-term and home care;

"Whereas the Harris government has now spent over \$235 million on blatantly partisan government adver-

tising in the form of glossy brochures, television and radio ads;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Conservative government of Mike Harris to immediately end its abuse of public office and terminate any further expenditure on political advertising and instead invest this money in the health care system in the province of Ontario."

I affix my signature, as I am in complete agreement with the sentiments of this petition.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I continue to receive petitions from workers and unions regarding cancer in the workplace, and I have more to present today. These are forwarded to me by Cathy Walker, the national health and safety director of the CAW. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas this year 130,000 Canadians will contract cancer and there are at minimum 17 funerals every day for Canadian workers who died from cancer caused by workplace exposure to cancer-causing substances known as carcinogens; and

"Whereas the World Health Organization estimates that 80% of all cancers have environmental causes and the International Labour Organization estimates that one million workers globally have cancer because of exposure at work to carcinogens; and

"Whereas most cancers can be beaten if government had the political will to make industry replace toxic substances with non-toxic substances; and

"Whereas very few health organizations study the link between occupations and cancer, even though more study of this link is an important step to defeating this dreadful disease;

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

"That it become a legal requirement that occupational history be recorded on a standard form when a patient presents at a physician for diagnosis or treatment of cancer; and

"That the diagnosis and occupational history be forwarded to a central cancer registry for analysis as to the link between cancer and occupation."

On behalf of my NDP colleagues, I proudly add my name to those of these petitioners.

HORSE RIDING SAFETY

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): I've got a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

"Whereas many of these inexperienced riders are children; and

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

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

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

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

1550

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas in 1998 the Mike Harris government forced hospitals in Bancroft, Belleville, Picton and Trenton, Ontario, to amalgamate into the Quinte Healthcare Corp;

"Whereas the fiscal management of each of the aforementioned hospitals prior to amalgamation was prudent, efficient and accountable to their communities;

"Whereas amalgamation and provincial government cutbacks have created a \$5-million deficit for the Quinte Healthcare Corp;

"Whereas any reduction in hospital and health care services in each of the aforementioned communities is completely unacceptable;

"Whereas this provincial government promised to ensure that the effect of amalgamation would not result in any reduction of health care or hospital services;

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

"Instruct Premier Mike Harris and Health Minister Tony Clement to provide enough funding to the Quinte Healthcare Corp that will cover the projected \$5-million deficit and ensure that quality health care and hospital services in the long term will continue in Bancroft, Belleville, Picton and Quinte West."

I am in full agreement with this, and I will affix my signature to this petition.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Further petitions? The Chair recognizes the member for Hamilton East.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): West.

The Acting Speaker: I guessed, and I guessed wrong. I'm sorry.

Mr Christopherson: It's a huge difference, Speaker, I want you to know.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the ... changes to the Employment Standards Act would permit businesses to force full-time work from 40 hours per week to 60 hours per week, and not pay overtime until more than 60 hours is worked; and

"Whereas these changes will allow businesses to force employees to work longer hours for the same amount of pay per year; and

"Whereas these changes would reduce the quality of life for all Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Ontario government to implement the following changes to the newly proposed Employment Standards Act:

"Reduce the standard work week to 40 hours

"Make overtime pay (time-and-a-half) after eight hours in a day, or 40 in a week

"Enable employees to take vacation days consecutively, and guarantee that half-hour lunch breaks are not broken up into smaller breaks

"Give employees the right to refuse all overtime without reprisal."

I proudly add my name to those of these petitioners.

PAPER SLUDGE

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents of the riding of Durham" and elsewhere in Ontario "have voiced their objections to the storage of paper sludge and related materials within the Oak Ridges moraine;

"Whereas the residents are concerned over the impact of this material on the air, water and soil of the moraine and on the health of those living nearby;

"Whereas this issue has been raised at several public meetings by both individual citizens, members of the Protect the Ridges Coalition and municipal" leaders;

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment is currently completing studies of the impact of paper sludge in the Durham riding;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take whatever steps are necessary to re-evaluate the use of paper sludge in Ontario, including its stockpiling and storage in rural areas, the spreading of this material on farm fields and any other commercial applications for this material," which is Sound Sorb, really. "And that such re-evaluation of this process include consultation with residents in communities where paper sludge is spread, stored or processed. And that the re-evaluation also include whatever technical studies are necessary to fully understand the impact of this material on the natural environment."

I am pleased to endorse this by signing it here today.

SALE OF SCHOOLS

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): This petition is addressed to the Parliament of Ontario.

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

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

“Whereas the Beatrice House is not a private school registered with the Ministry of Education, nor a mident has been issued to that organization;

“Whereas within the context of the zoning bylaw (438-86), the subject lands have been designated as R2 Z0.6 and permits a ‘private academic, philanthropic or religious school’;

“Whereas the TDSB has chosen not to lease the subject premises to a computer training company for \$1.25 million annually. Instead, the board has chosen to lease it to the Beatrice House for a fraction of the current market value;

“Whereas a lease has not been signed between the TDSB and Beatrice House while renovations to the building are underway;

“Whereas local taxpayers’ concerns have been ignored by the TDSB;

“Whereas other locations, such as the Brother Edmund Rice School at 55 Pelham Park or the Earls court Public School at 29 Ascot, which are being closed down, have been offered to Beatrice House to no avail;

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

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

“(1) Boards are to seek fair market value when selling, leasing or otherwise disposing of schools, except that the price for the property not to exceed the value of the ministry’s grant for the new pupil places when the purchaser is a coterminous board, a provincial school or a publicly funded care and treatment facility offering programs leading to a diploma’;

“(2) Boards are to offer the property to coterminous boards and other public agencies operating in the area in accordance with the priority order currently specified in regulation 444/98;

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

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

Since I agree, I’m delighted to sign the petition.

HORSE RIDING SAFETY

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): It’s a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

“Whereas many of these inexperienced riders are children; and

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

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

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

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

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

I’m pleased to affix my name to this petition.

MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGING

IMAGERIE PAR RÉSONANCE

MAGNÉTIQUE

M^{me} Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier) : J’ai une pétition de la part des commerçants d’Ottawa-Vanier :

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the current level of magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) services in Ottawa is the lowest of any major urban area in the province and waiting lists for these services exceed 7,000 patients and seven months;

« Attendu que les patients sur la liste d’attente font face à des délais de service qui peuvent être néfastes à leur santé et qui créent de la souffrance inutile en ce qui a trait à leur santé mentale et à leur capacité financière ;

“Whereas Ottawa area hospitals have submitted proposals for increased MRI services;

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

“That the Minister of Health be directed to take immediate action and provide sufficient funding to resolve the alarming backlog of patients waiting for MRI scans at Ottawa hospitals.”

Il me fait plaisir d’apposer ma signature.

1600

PRIVATE HOME DAYCARE

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas private home daycare in the Day Nurseries Act is defined as temporary care for reward or compensation of five children or less who are under 10 years of age;

“Whereas in rural areas, there is a lack and in great part no public transportation and considering that the population is often far away from centres and schools;

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

“That the Ontario government bring forth the following amendment to the definition of the private home daycare under the Day Nurseries Act which would allow a greater number than five children or less who are under 10 years of age in the rural areas.”

I affix my signature to that petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

DÉBAT SUR LE DISCOURS DU TRÔNE

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 24, 2001, on the motion for an address in reply to the speech of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): At the end of my remarks, I am going to be presenting amendments to the throne speech, just to put you on notice.

Last week the Conservatives delivered their so-called throne speech, one of the shortest and vaguest in living memory. In fact, it wasn't a throne speech; it was more like a 20-minute infomercial for a product that fewer and fewer people have any trust in or want to buy.

The government talked about accountability. I say, this government talking about accountability is like the Hell's Angels promoting a drug-free society, because they are the exact opposite of accountable. Where is the accountability in selling off Ontario's hydroelectricity system to the highest bidder? Where is the accountability, when we already know that George Bush and the United States want to get control over our hydroelectricity resources? Where is the accountability for the companies and consumers who will be paying Detroit or Chicago prices for made-in-Ontario power? What about the thousands of workers who will lose their jobs because of the government's foolish plan to sell off our hydroelectric power supply to for-profit companies? Where will they go for redress?

I want to be very clear, because that's one of the concrete things the government mentioned in their throne speech—that they intend to deregulate, privatize, sell off, what has been Ontario Hydro, what is now Ontario Power Generation. I want it clearly understood that, unlike the Liberals who merely want to slow down the government's plan but would allow this disastrous sell-off to continue, New Democrats are opposed to it and we

intend to stop it. We intend to campaign across the province to stop it, because we know that the only way to have accountability with respect to hydroelectricity supplies is to have a publicly run system.

Hydroelectricity is not just another commodity, which the government sometimes says. In the modern world, having a predictable, stable, reasonably priced supply of hydroelectricity is just as essential as oxygen. Electricity is absolutely essential in the modern economy in terms of people being able to operate their computers, light their homes, be assured of a safe food supply, be assured of heat and so on, and it is absolutely essential for many of our main industries in this province.

We not only intend to campaign against this; we will do everything we can to stop the sell-off of what is an essential service in Ontario. We will do everything we can to ensure that we have a publicly run hydroelectric system, and one that is accountable, accountable to a beefed-up Ontario Energy Board which will have the capacity to control and regulate what is happening.

But it's worse than just having a plan to sell off something as essential as our hydroelectricity system. This government also has a plan to privatize our sewer and water systems. In fact, if you read this 20-minute infomercial that they want to call a throne speech, when you read between the lines what emerges is that the government is going to continue to privatize, privatize, privatize.

Its answer to health care issues is to talk while at the same time continuing to turn over more and more of the health care system to private, for-profit operators through the back door. We most recently saw that at the private, for-profit cancer care clinic that is now operating. We now have essentially two-tier cancer treatment in Ontario. Actually it's three-tier: if you're from northern Ontario you can, according to this government, find your own way to the cancer treatment centre, even if you have to drive five, six or seven hours and pay out of your own pocket; if you're from a few select places in southern Ontario and you need cancer treatment, the government will pay your way there. It'll pay your taxi, your airfare, your food, your hotel, everything. Now we see the third tier: a private, for-profit cancer treatment clinic which, we're going to see, will be available in the not-too-distant future to those who have the money to be able to afford to pay. That's where this is headed.

Water: the privatization of water. I want to talk just for a minute about what happened in Great Britain. This idea of privatizing water, of turning our drinking water and the supplies of water that we need in our home every day over to private, for-profit companies for distribution, is not a new idea. This is very much one of Margaret Thatcher's ideas. But I want people across Ontario to reflect on what happened in Britain after the Conservative government there privatized, sold off, the municipal water systems.

What happened is that private companies immediately jacked up the water rates so that people found themselves paying double, triple the amount to get safe water in their homes. What also happened is that those private

companies substantially reduced the number of people out there who were doing maintenance on the water lines, the people who were ensuring that the water plants ran properly. So at both ends of the scale people ended up paying more to get water and yet they found they were dealing with a less and less stable, less and less predictable water supply system. Now, if you had money, you could pay more. But what happened to all kinds of lower-income families was that their water was simply shut off. Imagine, in the 21st century, when we should know that one of the prerequisites to having health as a human being is to have safe drinking water, the Conservative government allowed private companies to go around and shut people's water off.

The second thing that happened in lower- and modest-income neighbourhoods was that the companies really let their maintenance of the water system decline, and people in those lower- and modest-income neighbourhoods noticed a similar decline in the quality of their drinking water. Imagine, in the 21st century, when we know that this is so linked to our health, to our capacity to ward off diseases, to our capacity to have a healthy immune system, a government that says it cares about accountability that would sell of something as essential as the water supply. How do you get accountability out of that? If you have money, you can have accountability; you just pay more, and you get it. But if you don't have money, if you live in a lower- or modest-income family or lower- or modest-income neighbourhood, there is no accountability; you're simply told, "You don't have the money, you don't count."

People need to realize that is this government's strategy for our own water system here in Ontario: to turn it over to private operators where there will not be any accountability. If you have money, you'll be able to get safe drinking water. If you don't have money, you're at risk or your water gets disconnected. Something so essential, something as essential as safe drinking water, this government is prepared to abandon, to abandon all accountability.

It was quite stunning yesterday to read the accounts from the Walkerton inquiry about what happened, the fact that this government, when they came into office in 1995, after cutting the number of inspectors and enforcement officers, literally then said to the remaining inspectors and enforcement officers, "Don't do the inspections and don't prosecute. Don't prosecute against our corporate friends when you find them polluting."

Incredible. This government calls that accountability? In what is supposed to be one of the most democratic countries in the world, people have a right to know that their very natural and physical environment is being protected, and yet we had a government issuing the order, "Don't inspect and don't prosecute the polluters." Where is the accountability there? That, to me, sounds like negligence that could result in people dying, and unfortunately in this case it did.

1610

What would I advise the government to do? Instead of furthering the privatization of our water system, instead

of furthering this neglect, pass the Safe Drinking Water Act that my New Democratic colleague Marilyn Churley has brought here to the Legislature. Pass that act, put the standards in place and then put the inspection officers and the enforcement officers in place to ensure that people will receive the safe, clean drinking water they deserve.

I called the throne speech an infomercial for a discredited product, and nowhere is this truer than in the critical areas of health and education. Our health care system no longer meets the needs of Ontarians because this government has no other plan for it than, as I said, to continue privatizing it as much as possible through the side door. I simply want people to reflect on what's happened in the last six years.

Six years ago, home care in this province was being provided by community non-profit agencies, organizations like the Red Cross, like the Victorian Order of Nurses. They were organizations that were based in the community. You knew who was on the advisory board. You knew who it was who was responsible for handling Red Cross fundraising and for doing other Red Cross activities. You actually knew the people who were responsible for the delivery of home care in your community. Now, six years later, six years after this government, home care is overwhelmingly in the hands of private, for-profit corporations, many of them American private, for-profit corporations. If you try to phone them, even, in your community, you don't have a phone number. You don't know where to get in touch with them.

Moreover, these companies are not accountable. Yes, they're accountable to their corporate board and they're accountable to their shareholders, but they're not accountable to the very people in the province who need access to that very important part of health care: home care. Where is the accountability in that?

Then we have what's happening in long-term care. Almost all of the new long-term care beds that have been awarded by this government—they say "awarded"; I would say the long-term-care beds that are due the people of this province—have in fact been turned over again to private, for-profit corporations that are more interested in how much money they can make out of long-term care beds or nursing home beds, more interested in how much money they can make, and less interested in the quality of care.

If you want illustrations of that, look no further than many of the scenarios that have happened in the United States. Many of these corporations are American corporations. In fact this government has handed home care and long-term-care contracts over to companies that, in the United States, in a number of situations have been charged with respect to health care fraud in that country.

Where is the accountability in that? As I say, there is no accountability for the average citizen. There is only accountability in terms of the people who own these corporations, in terms of the people who intend to make money off the illness and health insecurity of our citizens. That is not, in my view, the kind of accountability we want.

With respect to the private, for-profit cancer treatment centre at Sunnybrook hospital, we've asked the government for the contract. The government says that they care about accountability, that they want to be an accountable government. Then you should be prepared to show the people of Ontario this contract the government has signed with a private, for-profit company that is going to operate the cancer treatment centre. It just seems to me that's as essential as A, B, C. This is government money, this is taxpayers' money that is going through the government of Ontario into the hands of this private, for-profit corporation. I think cancer patients, the families of cancer patients, the citizens of Ontario have a right to know how much they are being paid, what the bonuses are, what the acceleration clauses are etc. How much public money is going to this private corporation when cancer patients across this province are increasingly forced to deal with an insecure situation?

The other part of privatization that's happening is the delisting at OHIP. People need to know that this government has delisted over \$100 million a year in OHIP services. Services that used to be covered by OHIP, as a result of this government's activities, are no longer covered and people will have to pay for that to the tune of \$100 million a year out of their own pockets. Where is the accountability there? Where is the accountability when you go behind back doors with the Ontario Medical Association and you delist medical services and you don't even tell people about it? You then force them to pay for it out of their own pockets. That's not accountable government.

We have said for some time that the government should pass the patients' bill of rights that we presented in 1998 and have presented over and over again. It would provide for a number of accountability measures. It would provide for the kind of machinery that would not only hold the Minister of Health accountable, but would hold hospitals accountable, would hold physicians accountable and would hold homes for the aged accountable. It would give us the kind of accountability mechanism that works well in a publicly funded, publicly administered, efficient health care system.

The government doesn't do that. Instead, they continue to turn health care day by day through the side door, the back door, over to their corporate friends. What does this mean for the average citizen? What it means is this—in fact we're seeing it. The government says they're spending more money on health care, but the citizens of Ontario are getting less health care and lower-quality health care. What the government is proving by its course of action is what we already know from the United States, and that is, health care delivered by private, for-profit companies costs people more and delivers less health care. That's what's being proven in Ontario today, that private, for-profit delivery of health care will cost people more, but at the end of the day people will get less health care and a lower quality of health care.

Then there is the situation in our classrooms. This government in some ways is like a child playing with

matches. They've created a firestorm in education and then they blame everyone else for what's happened. They themselves refuse to be held accountable. They themselves refuse to answer any questions. Whenever something goes wrong, they point to the teachers, they point to the board of education, they point to the trustees, they demean the students. But we have never had so much conflict, so much bad feeling in our schools and in our education system going back over the last 50 years as we've had in the last six years. Where is the accountability in that? Where is the road to a better education system?

No one would suggest that you can improve the health care system by mounting a six-year war against doctors. No one would suggest that. But what we've seen here is a government that has waged a six-year war against teachers, against the support staff in our schools, against principals and vice-principals, against trustees. You can't possibly improve our education system by conducting a six-year war against the very people who work very hard and are very dedicated to our education system and our schools, yet that's what this government has done and they refuse to be accountable for it.

The cutbacks in adult education, the tuition increases in terms of post-secondary education: all these things have created serious problems in our education system.

1620

Then we have the problem of early childhood education. This government has announced and re-announced and re-announced their so-called Early Years project at least five times in the last two years, and yet no one can find any evidence of it. Oh, yes, sorry. We did find some evidence of it. We found that the government was pressuring the local health unit to hire a Conservative party hack who knows nothing about early childhood education, who knows nothing about the learning environment for young children. The government was trying to lobby, to push a local authority to hire a Conservative party hack to head up the Early Years project in the community. That doesn't say much for the Early Years project. It says, in fact, that the government wants to use it as a way to hand out patronage jobs to its unqualified supporters, and not look for the best people who can provide the best kinds of strategies and plans for our children. That's the only evidence we've seen of the so-called Early Years project by this government.

I've spoken about three or four things that touch people—the folly, if I may, of following California in terms of the sell-off of the electricity system. People in Ontario need to know that three years ago, this government was saying that what they were doing in California was the right thing to do. This government was saying that privatization and deregulation of hydroelectricity in California was going to lower the electricity rates. This government was saying that Ontario should copy California. That's all on the record. It's here in Hansard.

Now we see the folly in California. We see that people's hydroelectricity rates have gone up and up and up, doubled and tripled, and they're going to go up even more in the next six months. In spite of paying double

and triple the amount for electricity, people still face a summer of brownouts and blackouts. On top of that, we see the California government having to bail out these private energy corporations that this government is so in love with, to the tune of \$10 billion. We see the people of California calling on their government to re-establish control, to re-regulate the electricity system.

I think this government should be listening to what's happening in California now, not repeating the follies of what was done in California three years ago. I pointed out to the Minister of Energy today that once they sell off 65% of the electricity generating capacity in Ontario to these international energy companies, in other words, sell off 65% of what was the old Ontario Hydro—I said to the minister, “Do you think they're going to want to sell the power here for the prevailing cost in Ontario, or don't you think they're going to want to sell it in New York at 123% more or sell it in Chicago for 60% more or Detroit for 60% more?” That's how the private market works.

Private companies, when they get control of electricity, are not going to be concerned as to whether my lights are on or my heat is on or my computer works. They're going to be concerned with one thing: how much money can they get for the electricity? They will get more money by taking electricity that's produced here in Ontario and selling it in New York, Chicago and Detroit. I said to the minister, “What are you going to do when that starts to happen?” His basic answer was, “Well, we're going to establish rules that will require them to sell it here in Ontario first and sell it at the appropriate price.” That's what California tried to do. After they privatized and deregulated the electricity system and the rates started going through the roof, they then came back and said, “We insist that you sell it at a lower price and we insist that you sell it here in California.” The international energy corporations simply thumbed their nose at the government and the people. That's why they got into such serious blackouts, brownouts and a shortage of electricity.

It seems that this government has learned nothing from the experience there. They simply want to repeat it. Once again, what is “accountable”? What is the definition of “accountability” that would cover a scenario where a government wants to sell off something so essential as the electricity system that people need to organize their lives?

There are some other things that I don't think anyone can justify, that yet this government continues to do. We've seen this government come in and do away with rent controls. At the same time, they did away with any attempt, any strategy to ensure there is affordable housing in Ontario. I could take you out and I could find five developers today who will tell you they are not interested in building affordable housing. They are in the development industry because they want to make a lot of money, and they make money by building houses and by building apartment condominium units for people who have high incomes. That way they can make a higher profit. They are not interested in building housing for lower-, modest- and even middle-income families.

So we have a crisis happening now in every city in Ontario, and it's even starting to move into small towns, where people who do not have high incomes cannot afford a place to live, and those who do have a place to live are literally one paycheque away from losing the apartment they have, from losing the roof they have over their heads. Where is the accountability in following that strategy? It seems to me that housing is essential. You can't organize your life for work, you can't organize your life for education, you can't organize your life for training, you can't organize your life for anything if you don't have a roof over your head or if the roof over your head is so insecure that you're worried you might lose it next month. But that is the strategy this government has chosen. It's selling off the existing bank of affordable housing and it has no strategy to build new affordable housing. This is a crisis that is literally going to grow worse and worse by the week.

Since the death of rent controls, we have seen rents escalate. I'm not talking about the doubling of rent; I'm talking in some cases about the tripling of rent. An apartment that used to rent for \$500 a month is now \$1,500 a month. That is not unusual at all in a city like Toronto or Ottawa or Hamilton or even a city like London. It's not even unusual now in a smaller city like Peterborough or Guelph. Those things are happening. What is “accountable”? What definition of “accountability” covers a government doing that kind of irresponsible thing?

You know, we have a new 60-hour workweek in Ontario. The government passed the legislation just before Christmas and then, as I understand it, on July 1 they're going to proclaim the law in force. The government's line is that the only people who would be forced to work a 60-hour workweek would be those workers who agree in writing with their employer. In other words, the employer would have to come to the worker and say, “I want you to work a 60-hour week the next three weeks. Will you sign on the dotted line?” The government would have you believe that somehow they're going to be nice, polite agreements.

Put yourself in the place of a new Canadian, someone who has come to Ontario, who perhaps does not speak English that well. This is their first job in Ontario, and the boss walks up to them and says, “You're going to work 60 hours this week and you're going to work 60 hours next week, and the week after that I'm going to want you to work 60 hours as well, and I'm not going to pay you overtime.” Do you think that worker, who just got a job, who doesn't speak English that well, who is new to our province and new to our country is going to jump up and say, “I demand my rights. I'm not going to work 60 hours”? Of course not, because they know that if they refuse to work the 60 hours, they won't have a job next week, or they will not have any opportunity for promotion.

What the government doesn't want people to know is that they've also got away with the entitlement of workers to two weeks of vacation taken together.

1630

Under the old Employment Standards Act any worker, any non-unionized worker in the province, had the right to say to an employer, "I want to take my holidays over these two weeks. I'm letting you know that I want my holidays over these two weeks," and they would get two weeks of holidays in consecutive days.

The government has done away with that. In fact, an employer can now come to that same employee and say, "I will let you have one day of your vacation next week, I'll let you have one day of your vacation two weeks from now, I'll let you have one day of your vacation five weeks from now, and seven and nine and 11." Goodbye, family vacation; goodbye, opportunity to spend any time with your children, with your spouse. How incredibly inhumane, how incredibly destructive of family life.

But this government says, "Oh, no, it'll never happen that way, because the employee would have to agree." Imagine a young worker fresh out of college or university. It's their first job. The employer comes along and says, "By the way, you don't get two weeks of vacation. You get to take your vacation days one day now, one day next month" etc.

The government would have you believe that young worker is going to jump to his or her feet and say, "No, I refuse." It's not going to happen that way, because that young worker, in the insecure context they're in, is not going to do that. They're simply going to be pushed over, and they'll fall into line. It is quite destructive.

I don't think any of these things can be deemed accountable. I don't think any of these things can be covered by any definition of accountability. They are irresponsible in terms of people, they're irresponsible in terms of their working lives, they're irresponsible in terms of people's capacity to house themselves—totally irresponsible.

But I'll tell you, this government's corporate friends will make a lot of money off this. Imagine an employer who can schedule his employees for 60 hours this week, 60 hours next week, 45 hours the week after and 15 hours after that, and then avoids having to pay overtime.

That's the other thing that is part of this Employment Standards Act. The overtime hours are now averaged, so despite the fact you've worked 60 hours, you've worked very hard, you get no overtime pay. That's a lot of money taken out of a worker's pocket and that's a lot of money in the pockets of this government's corporate friends. That's what's really happening here.

I want to present to the Legislature an amendment which points out in very specific terms exactly what this government has not done and is lacking in accountability, and what they have done which is so irresponsible and negligent and lacking in accountability. I just want to say to people that we, as New Democrats, are going to struggle to put forward to people a strategy for affordable housing. As New Democrats, we're going to continue to put forward for people a strategy for clean drinking water and a clean environment. We're going to continue to put forward a strategy for child care and early childhood

education and a strategy on how we can not only protect the medicare system we have but in fact improve it and enhance it. I talk about medicare because the lesson of this government is that medicare is more efficient, more effective, more fair and balanced in terms of delivery of health care than any of the private, for-profit machinery this government and its corporate friends are trying to inflict on people now.

I want to read the amendment. It reads as follows:

"The leader of the third party moves:

"That the address in reply to the speech of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session be amended by striking out all of the words after 'We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislature Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled,' and substituting the following:

"deprecate the Tory government's intention to sell Ontario's secure public electricity provider to the highest bidder, while it squanders the education of our children and bankrupts our health care system; and

"Whereas this government caters to its big business friends in the corporate, for-profit energy sector, shields polluters from public scrutiny and inflicts sky-high rate hikes on vulnerable electricity consumers; and

"Whereas this government has ignored its own report, abandoning school-aged children by failing to provide extracurricular activities; and

"Whereas this government allows special interest groups like the Ontario Medical Association to dictate health care policy that favours pay raises for doctors instead of ensuring province-wide access to publicly funded health care services provided by salaried medical teams; and

"Whereas this government continues to recklessly endanger the environment by slashing the environment ministry's staff and budget, risking the security of Ontario's water supply; and

"Whereas the Conservatives condemn low-income families to living in unsafe, unhealthy, overpriced housing by failing to build affordable housing and by removing rent controls; and

"Whereas this government forces people to work 60-hour weeks in order to keep their jobs;

"Therefore this House rejects the Tories' "accountability" agenda and demands that the government apologize to Ontarians who have suffered chaos in their schools and hospitals, inequality at their workplaces, and unsafe water and air. The House demands that the government maintain a publicly owned electricity supply and abandon its agenda to privatize water and sewage systems. It demands that the government reform primary care and competitive bidding practices and restore quality, publicly funded home care services in Ontario. This government must cease its attacks on the poor by ending the 60-hour workweek, by raising the minimum wage immediately to \$7.50 an hour, by ending the clawback of the federal child tax benefit, and by investing in safe, affordable, licensed child care services for working families."

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The leader of the third party moves that the address in reply to the speech of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session be amended by striking out all of the words after—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Acting Speaker: I would dispense, if I could; I cannot—the words after “We, Her Majesty’s most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled,” and substituting the following:

“deplore the Tory government’s intention to sell Ontario’s secure public electricity provider to the highest bidder, while it squanders the education of our children and bankrupts our health care system; and

“Whereas this government caters to its big business friends in the corporate, for-profit energy sector, shields polluters from public scrutiny and inflicts sky-high rate hikes on vulnerable electricity consumers; and

“Whereas this government has ignored its own report, abandoning school-aged children by failing to provide extracurricular activities; and

“Whereas this government allows special interest groups like the Ontario Medical Association to dictate health care policy that favours pay raises for doctors instead of ensuring province-wide access to publicly funded health care services provided by salaried medical teams; and

“Whereas this government continues to recklessly endanger the environment by slashing the environment ministry’s staff and budget, risking the security of Ontario’s water supply; and

“Whereas the Conservatives condemn low-income families to living in unsafe, unhealthy, overpriced housing by failing to build affordable housing and removing rent controls; and

“Whereas this government forces people to work 60-hour weeks in order to keep their jobs;

“Therefore this House rejects the Tories’ ‘accountability’ agenda and demands that the government apologize to Ontarians who have suffered chaos in their schools and hospitals, inequality at their workplaces, and unsafe water and air. The House demands that the government maintain a publicly owned electricity supply and abandon its agenda to privatize water and sewage systems. It demands that the government reform primary care, end competitive bidding practices and restore quality, publicly-funded home care services in Ontario. This government must cease its attack on the poor by ending the 60-hour workweek, by raising the minimum wage immediately to \$7.50 an hour, by ending the clawback of the federal child tax benefit, and by investing in safe, affordable, licensed child care services for working families.”

1640

The Chair recognizes the member for Kenora-Rainy River and I apologize for reversing the names in your riding before.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): Mr Speaker, you’re getting pretty good at my riding name. Thank you, I do appreciate that and I’m sure the people in my riding appreciate that as well.

I am very pleased to stand in this House this afternoon and join in this debate on the speech from the throne. Last Thursday—

Interjection.

Mr Gill: It’s pretty warm here. I just came in.

Last Thursday, April 19, our government kicked off the new legislative session with a plan to protect and enhance the economic progress we’ve made under the Mike Harris government. We call it, obviously, 21 steps into the 21st century. It lays out the most important measures we as a government will take to ensure Ontario’s growth and success: 21 new major initiatives; 21 new sets of promises. But I think it’s fair to look back on the promises we’ve already kept to date: 166 tax cuts for jobs, work for welfare, removing barriers to growth and so many others. Ontarians know our government keeps its promises.

We sit only blocks from Toronto city hall. In recent weeks Toronto city council has set new records for avoiding hard decisions, passing the buck, petty behaviour and mindless irresponsibility. At the same time, we are only an hour’s flight to Ottawa. In our national capital, the federal government arrogantly grows fatter and more irresponsible each day. The federal government is kept in office by the evil miracle of the vote split and also by the sinister skill of panicking our more vulnerable citizens. All the while the business of the federal government drifts aimlessly and Canadians suffer.

What a relief for Ontario taxpayers to have here at Queen’s Park a government that listens to the people and a government that delivers results. Our government at least is up to the job. The Harris government has the drive and courage to set priorities and stay focused on those priorities, to speak about what the people of the province are interested in and to build for prosperity today, tomorrow and decades into our future.

Ontario has a history of building infrastructure for a long-range timeline. I call it foresight. We are committed to making tough decisions on the issues of today, like the school strike. We know the Harris government is the party to have the courage and credibility to do the right thing, as we have done today.

My heart goes out to all the parents, students and teachers whose lives have been disrupted by the Toronto strike, and the ones in Windsor as well. Like many parents, I’ll be happy to see this strike end and the sooner the better.

It’s for every parent and child in Ontario that I’ll be voting for the throne speech. The throne speech protects jobs, keeps families financially secure and ensures Ontario remains strong. Our government’s vision is the people’s vision. There’s no doubt that we are a govern-

ment which is committed to act in the best interests of all Ontarians, not just the special interest lobbies.

When it comes to showing leadership, this government has been there. Take quality health care, for example. It is one of the greatest benefits that we enjoy living in Ontario. It is also one of the biggest challenges faced by this government and all other provinces in Canada. Since 1995, the Mike Harris government has worked hard to modernize and improve our health care system. We took strong steps toward fundamental reform of the system, improving our hospitals, investing in long-term care, community-based services, health promotion, nursing and mental health programs.

At the same time, this government has increased spending dramatically over the past few years to ensure quality services are delivered.

We worked hard, but we haven't been alone. It's been with the help of Ontario's hard-working people—doctors, nurses, hospital staff—that this government has achieved health care improvements. I would like to pay tribute to those people today, who are the ones saving lives, healing the sick and keeping us healthy. Our government has committed in the throne speech to consult all caregivers, as well as patients and others, on how to spend our health care dollars wisely and efficiently.

Our government will increase health spending for the sixth year, but more money alone is not the answer. Our health system is in need of fundamental reform if it is to provide the care Ontarians deserve and need. We are committed to reform and we have been doing it for the last six years. It is time that the federal government recognize this fact and start to change its own methods of funding and control. Ottawa has established a national health care commission and we urge them to give it the freedom to consider everything from the ground up. We are also urging them to explore all solutions to the sustainability challenge we face in health care.

Our health care reforms are a work in progress, but we can already see their positive effect on a local level. Residents in my riding, Mr Speaker, as you said so eloquently, the riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, can certainly see those benefits. Less than a year ago, a site in my riding at Bramalea Road and Bovaird Drive was selected as the site for a brand new hospital building in Brampton. It will replace the too old, too small building that presently serves Brampton, known as the Peel Memorial Hospital, or now known as the William Osler Health Centre. The new hospital will be part of the William Osler Health Centre group, which also operates hospitals in Etobicoke and Georgetown.

The new facility will provide improved services, the most up-to-date technology and allow the hospital to recruit the very best doctors and nurses to continue providing quality services to all residents of Brampton. Many more of my constituents will be able to receive the care they need right in Brampton instead of having to travel all the way to downtown Toronto. With Brampton's fast-growing population, it is vital that health care reforms continue.

People in my riding tell me that while they're concerned about health care, they also want our government to keep their taxes down. That is why I am proud to support Premier Harris when he reaffirmed his commitment to keep cutting taxes. Tax cuts are creating jobs. They are helping people get off welfare and they're enhancing our standard of living.

I often remind myself that there's no such thing as the government's money; it is money belonging to each and every Ontarian. The throne speech renews our commitment to the hard-working taxpayers of our province. This government recognized that public institutions like municipalities, hospitals and schools consume a large percentage of your tax dollars, but there has been little reporting back to the taxpayers as to how these institutions spend your money. Our government plans to introduce amendments to the Audit Act, and these amendments will ensure that organizations funded by tax dollars use our money effectively. We will ensure dollars intended for specific programs are not diverted away from their intended purposes.

It is important for us to recommit ourselves to controlling the expansion of government. The throne speech commitment to sell businesses that government should not operate and assets that it should not own is welcomed by residents in my riding.

The throne speech outlines our commitment to all Ontarians. This government has worked hard to move our province away from those days of weak leadership, big spending and high taxes, not to mention big deficits and a skyrocketing debt.

The speech from the throne was an excellent step toward keeping Ontarians on the right track. I'm very proud to support the 21 major initiatives outlined by this government.

1650

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments? The Chair recognizes the member for Davenport.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I was before him.

The Acting Speaker: I'm sorry. What did I say? Did I not say Davenport?

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): Davenport.

I was very happy to listen to the comments by the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, but I want him to know that on this side of the House we're not here simply to criticize you. I think we're here to do this constructively, but there's one thing the member should know. He's not in Ottawa. This is Ontario. We're in Toronto. Simply to be critical of the federal government on a consistent basis does absolutely nothing to improve conditions here in our city or in this province of Ontario.

Secondly, let me put it this way: the member says his government is listening to the people and consequently acting upon their demands. If I'm permitted to ask him one question, has this government listened to the people when they said to you, "Open up the hospitals you shut down"? What has happened is that as soon as you took

over the reins of government, as soon as you had control over our hospitals, they were shut down—surely, not all of them, but some of them. Where my residents are in the west end of Toronto, they felt they were not only left out of the decision-making process, but left out in the cold because when the emergency vehicle arrived and took the sick to an emergency ward, we know what happened: the hospital ward was full and wouldn't take the patient.

I say to the member, is that the way you say you're listening to the people and is that the way you're going to act in terms of being sensitive to their demands and requests? That is no way, for sure, to try to overcome the problems we have in the city of Toronto.

Mr Bisson: I listened intently to the comments from the member on the other side and I fail to see why a member would be a proud of what the government is doing, for example, around the issue of Hydro.

I represent, as do other members in this Legislature, a part of the province where there are a lot of industrial users of hydro. I look at what this government is doing vis-à-vis the deregulation and privatization of Hydro. We know that within the next year there's going to be about a 20% increase in hydro costs to the utility users across the province. That's both residential and industrial. For companies in my riding, like Falconbridge mines, Tembec, Columbia Forest Products, Abitibi-Price, and the list goes on, that 20% increase on top of the already 300% increase they've had in natural gas prices because of deregulation in the gas sector, is really a job killer. This government by way of its policies is going to take away one of the underpinnings of our economy.

One of the ways this province has been successful over the years and one of the ways we've been competitive compared to the United States and other jurisdictions is by providing cheap, affordable electrical power at cost and a very sustainable system.

Interjection: That's out the window.

Mr Bisson: It's gone. You guys stand in this House and have the gall to say, "We're proud of our economic development agenda." Do you realize what you guys are doing to the industries of this province by deregulating and privatizing Hydro? My friend from Sault Ste Marie, Mr Martin, has Algoma Steel right now going through a massive restructuring—a huge utilizer of hydro. You stand there and say you're proud your government is going to allow a 20% increase in the first year, and God knows how much when it goes into the private sector. Compared to what happened in California and Alberta, I say it's a recipe for disaster. This government is about killing jobs, not about creating them, when they go ahead and try to follow an agenda of privatization of Hydro. You should be ashamed of yourselves.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I certainly enjoyed the presentation put forward by the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale in response to the throne speech. It certainly was very detailed. A lot of good information was had in that presentation.

I was rather disappointed to hear some of the comments just recently being made by the member for Timmins-James Bay, talking about the privatization of Hydro. You know, it was during their term that the debt mushroomed. I thought when we were campaigning in 1995 we had a debt of Ontario Hydro more around the \$33-billion or \$34-billion mark. Now I find out, after we've paid down \$3 billion to \$4 billion, that it's at the \$38-billion mark. This is after we started checking the books and finding out where all that debt really was.

He's talking about making a mistake on privatization. I don't think, with the kind of escalation that we had in electricity costs during their term here in the province of Ontario—a very, very serious error obviously was being made, and the direction that we're going is certainly a healthy one. We have lots of production of electricity here in the province of Ontario; more coming on from both Bruce and from Pickering, as well as something like upwards of 30 different producers and generators are also coming on stream that are building new plants.

Here's an opportunity for green power, and green power is being produced in the province of Ontario, whether it be from solar power or from wind power. This is something their government could have been doing. But while they were in office, the ones who talked so much about the environment and the good things about environment—they acted so little; they acted rarely. Here would have been an opportunity for them to have brought forth the production of green power and blended that in with what Ontario Hydro was indeed producing.

I again compliment the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale for an excellent presentation.

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): Again we heard today the member talk about a number of initiatives, but they've neglected one word, and that's the word "agriculture." That just shows the contempt of this government for the second-largest industry in this province.

The throne speech made no mention of the word "agriculture." The member's speech made no mention of agriculture. The parliamentary assistant to agriculture didn't mention the word "agriculture." I think that's a sad day for this province, that the second-largest industry is totally neglected in the 21-point plan of this government. It is very clear that the Harris government has no regard for the province's second-largest industry. Despite being elected in 1995 on a promise of no cuts to the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, it has done a complete about-face in the past five years, slashing this vital ministry by over 50%.

The reference to the zero per cent increase in budgeting of government ministries in the throne speech shows very clearly that again the budget of this important ministry has been flatlined. This throne speech did nothing to alleviate the growing fears that this ministry is being transformed into one driven by a rural affairs agenda, leaving out the historic agricultural roots of its mandate.

Number 7 of the 21-point action plan makes a vague reference to support for economic development and growth in rural Ontario, the north and other sectors. But do you know what? This government doesn't grasp one single fundamental point of the equation, that there's no way you're going to have a strong rural economic component—that if you don't have a strong and vibrant agricultural community, the rural economy is not going to be there. There is no commitment to agriculture by this government. You've abandoned the farmers of Ontario and you should be ashamed.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale has two minutes to respond.

Mr Gill: I do appreciate all the various members who took part in this debate. You know, there was a discussion on hydro and hydro rates, about the cheap, affordable power that we had. This member forgets that cheap, affordable power was coming from subsidized rates. That's where the \$38-billion deficit comes in.

1700

Last weekend I had the pleasure of visiting the Napa Valley, which is a great part of California. I talked to some of the people there. I talked to some of my friends there, about if they are suffering or what their problems are. I can guarantee you that the people I talked to at least are not suffering. The truth is, the state of California did not produce any power for the last 10 years. There have been people opposing power production. I am very happy to say that in my riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale there is a company, which I will leave nameless for now, that is going to be spending C\$1 billion building 800 megawatts of power, and they are very close to starting production. If this was not a lucrative business, they would not be doing it.

One of the members opposite talked about hospital closings. Yes, we went through hospital restructuring. In my own riding, we combined the Peel hospital along with Etobicoke and Georgetown to make the William Osler Health Centre. That means we cut out a lot of fat, a lot of administrative overhead, and the hospitals are happy and working very well. At the same time, instead of closing the hospital, we're building one of the biggest hospitals in my riding, close to 716 beds. We are very proud of our record.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to have the member for Brampton Centre give his 10-minute speech at this point.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent for that change? Agreed?

Mr Bisson: On a point of order, Speaker: I just want to be clear that we are also going to have questions and comments after the 10 minutes.

The Acting Speaker: That's part of the consent. Is it agreed? It is agreed. The Chair recognizes the member for Brampton Centre.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to continue this portion of the debate. I don't mind the questions and answers

afterwards particularly, even though if we were to share our time you would only have had one round, but now you'll have two kicks at the cat, as it were.

Mr Bisson: And what a cat to kick.

Mr Spina: Yes, and we're happy to do that.

I'm very proud of the structure and tone of the throne speech that took place this past week, because this is the launch pad, this is the direction in which this government will be going over not just the next two or three years but also the next five to 10 or 15 years. We have to think ahead as to what we want in this province to be able to leave a legacy that will be good for our children and our grandchildren, for those of us who have children and grandchildren.

We have to be cognizant of the growth that has to be coupled with the fiscal responsibility we must have as a government. The growth in the economy, growth in jobs remains and must remain the priority not just of this government but of all governments. It is essential to protect the gains that have been made and to ensure the prosperity that has been experienced by us, not just in this city and in this province, but indeed in this country. We have to continue to remove the barriers to jobs and investment, and growth will then continue to happen.

This government will honour its pledge to cut taxes to create more jobs as well as removing the barriers to jobs. A new business impact test being created by the Red Tape Commission is in fact the key element that would be applied to proposed regulations and legislation that could possibly impair our ability to attract investment and jobs. I was very pleased that this business impact test was created by the Red Tape Commission, started by the former Chair, Bob Wood, followed through when I was co-chair, and now being carried forward to ultimate fruition by Steve Gilchrist from Toronto.

A new task force will measure and monitor this Ontario productivity, the competitiveness and the economic progress compared not just to other provinces but to the US jurisdictions and the G7.

The member for Dovercourt talked about closed hospitals and so on in this province—

Mr Ruprecht: It's Davenport.

Mr Spina: Davenport. I apologize. I was thinking of the fellow you defeated, who was from Dovercourt, right? Both honourable members. In any case—

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): You got the better Tony.

Mr Spina: Yeah, I got the right Tony.

I want to indicate that where the HSRC restructuring commission recommended the closure or conversion of hospital facilities as acute care centres, it was really looking at the fact that some of these centres were underutilized. You talk about the deferral of emergencies. Well, when I look at one ward on University Avenue or at St Joe's Health Care Centre being diverted and you need an extra three to five minutes to get to another emergency ward, hold that up to some of the rural and more suburban areas. As my colleague from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale indicated, in Brampton we have

one hospital facility. Granted, it was merged on an administrative basis with Etobicoke and Georgetown, but it was still and remains one hospital of less than 400 beds. Forty-four per cent of our caseload goes elsewhere. If we end up in an emergency room diversion, it's not a three-to-five-minute ride, it is a 15-to-25-minute ride. So it's critical that the resources that were saved in under-utilized facilities go to places where they are desperately needed.

We talked about growth in this province, and the minister talked earlier today about investment on Smart Growth and the population of this province—

The Acting Speaker: Order. Stop the clock for a minute, please.

I want to introduce to the members some very special guests we have in Ontario today. I would ask that they please stand up when I say their names, even if I don't pronounce them very well. These are visitors from Estonia, and they are visiting the Ministry of Education. I'd like to introduce them; they're in the member's east gallery.

I want to introduce the Honourable Tonis Lukas, Minister of Education; Levi Sher, deputy mayor of Tallinn; Valeri Korb, head of the city council of Kohtia-Jarve; Imre Liiv, mayor of Narva. The Estonian delegation is accompanied by Robert McConnell and Peeter Mehisto. We welcome you to our Legislature this afternoon.

I apologize to the member for Brampton Centre for interrupting, but they have other commitments and I wanted to do that before they left. Thank you very much.

Mr Spina: I'm very pleased to allow the break in my comments to welcome these distinguished guests to our country, to our province and particularly to our Legislature. Even though we have comments back and forth, as you can see, we are all colleagues and we do our best to represent our constituents in the way we see fit.

I was speaking about health care and the growth. What we experienced in Brampton was a municipality that many years ago was growing under amalgamated regional governments of 1974. Because of that positive step made by the Davis government, we experienced phenomenal growth, and in 1975 when I moved to Brampton it was a wonderful town of 75,000 people. I thought, "I could live in this town" because it reminded me of where I was from, which was Sault Ste Marie. It was about the same size as the Soo, so I was very pleased that this was a community that I would be comfortable to move to.

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Brampton now, 25 years later, is breaching the 310,000 mark. We had one hospital then, with about 500 beds. There was a reduction in beds during the Liberal reign, although the minister of the day, Elinor Caplan, whose son is a member today, had agreed to give us a new hospital at the time. The proposal went forward in 1988-90 for a new hospital to add to the Brampton hospital, even though some beds had been closed to control some of the costs.

The infamous 1990 election campaign was called, and what happened was that the Rae government took over,

and the interesting fact was that somehow this proposal for a new hospital for a vastly growing area was lost. I can only presume that maybe politics had something to do with it. I don't know. Two Liberal members in a riding now where the government was NDP, but I wouldn't want to cast any negative aspersions in saying that they forgot perhaps where the need really was and there were other priorities. It was ironic, and I think it happened in other communities, from what I understand.

Well, here we are, folks. We are now in the year 2001. Former Minister of Health Witmer announced that finally, after breaching a 300,000 population base, we will get a new 700-and-some-bed hospital. But in the meantime, we have to be able to address the growing needs of the existing health care needs of the city as it stands, because it doesn't take a couple of months to build a hospital, it takes three to five years. I'm very happy to say that this government is moving forward to assist the existing facilities and expand the existing facilities in Brampton, in Mississauga and other places around the province to be able to meet the needs of our health care requirements.

In conclusion, I'm very pleased that we are moving ahead with the smart growth program, because that will put dollars where and when they are needed in this province on a planned basis. That's the objective of Premier Harris. That is the objective of this government. That is the strategy of this party for the betterment of the future of our people.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Sometimes time constraints don't allow members to speak on as many subjects as they would like, and I know the member wanted to address the shortage of ophthalmologists in the Niagara region. As he would be aware, we have an insufficient number of ophthalmologists. Therefore people are being asked by the Ministry of Health now to travel down the highway to Hamilton to get their eye care. The medical experts in Hamilton say, "We're already full and backed up, so we really can't take on the people from the Niagara Peninsula." It's also inconvenient for the people of the Niagara Peninsula.

I know the member as well probably wanted to talk about the problem of a lack of doctors, a shortage of family physicians and specialists throughout the Niagara Peninsula. One of the things that we didn't look at as a society, and certainly the government has not in the last six years it has been in power, is the age of the present doctors and the fact that as they are getting older they are retiring, some are passing on, others are moving. As a result, we have a genuine crisis in the Niagara region for people who require the services of a family physician or certain specialists such as ophthalmologists and dermatologists, and there are other specialties as well.

This is obviously a problem that is not simply confined to the Niagara region, but since I represent that part in the Legislature, I thought I should raise it time and again in here so that perhaps the member can assist me in persuading the Minister of Health of the need for some

pretty comprehensive action on the part of the government to ensure that residents of St Catharines and the surrounding area in the Niagara Peninsula have sufficient family physicians, have sufficient medical services, have sufficient specialists to meet the needs of a population which is significantly older on average than the rest of the province. I welcome the member's assistance in bringing that to the attention of the minister.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I want to maintain this focus on Niagara region. You heard from my colleague the member for Timmins-James Bay, who made reference to Sault Ste Marie and the impact of your sale of, privatization of, deregulation of Ontario Hydro based on the California-Alberta models, and the fact that your management of hydroelectricity in this province is going to result in huge electricity cost increases for every single homeowner in this province, regardless of their income, regardless of whether they're low-income retirees, low-income workers, people on social assistance. It's going to result in the same incredible electricity cost increases for small businesses, as well as for large, like those industries down in Niagara region that rely so heavily on electricity: places like the Carborundum, places like Atlas Steel in Welland, places like the foundry at General Motors in St Catharines.

The fact is, you are driving heavy industry out of this province. The Conservative government is driving heavy industry out of this province: heavy industry, value-added manufacturing, with the significant wages that they pay their workers. Yes, job destroyers. Oh, you speak of your job creation, but for every four or five minimum-wage jobs, seasonal jobs, part-time jobs, temporary jobs, \$6.85-an-hour jobs that you create, you destroy 20 industrial, value-added manufacturing jobs.

You are ripping the heart out of communities like Thorold, St Catharines and Welland and communities like them, industrial communities, good communities, communities of hard-working people. You're ripping the heart out of them with your deindustrialization of this province. It's yet another attack by virtue of spiking electricity costs in this province.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for children, minister responsible for francophone affairs): My apologies to my colleague from Northumberland. I listened with great interest to my colleague from Brampton. He is, of course, a very strong advocate for health care in his community and, indeed, a strong advocate for northern Ontario in various capacities he has had over his time in the Legislature and someone who was born up north originally.

Like him, I'm very concerned about health care. I've been working very closely with the Queensway-Carleton Hospital and Tom Schonberg, the president, and Michael Gaffney, the chair of the board there, where we've been working to get an increase in their budget. We got \$11 million in recent weeks to help them close the gap, and we're going to continue to work with them on those important issues, like my colleague in Brampton has, no

doubt, with the 400-bed hospital in his constituency that he raised.

I know he would have wanted to talk about agriculture, but he only had 10 minutes. I know in my riding that's a big issue.

Mr Peters: He mentioned the word "agriculture."

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Hon Mr Baird: Farmers were very pleased with the \$90 million of support, particularly to the corn producers, whom I know I've met with a number of times. We're going to continue to work to ensure that agriculture, which even in my home community—the member opposite will be surprised to learn that in the city of Ottawa we've got more farms than any city in North America the size of our new city of Ottawa. In my constituency, we've got a lot of grains and oilseed farmers, a lot of corn producers, dairy farmers. I know the member opposite would have wanted to talk about agriculture being one of the cornerstones of the Ontario economy, as I often do in caucus and in cabinet.

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We've got to continue to ensure that we don't place all of our eggs in the manufacturing sector or in the basket of high technology. Agriculture, agri-food, food processing and the value-added jobs that come from it are incredibly important to the province of Ontario. We've got to continue to ensure that the economies of rural and small-town Ontario, places like Metcalf, Burritt's Rapids and Richmond, remain viable so they will continue to create jobs, hope and opportunity.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Peters: It's a real pleasure to hear somebody on the other side actually mention the word "agriculture," and somebody representing an urban riding, because part of the problem in this province is that we don't—I certainly would hope you will be very supportive of the Minister of Agriculture around the cabinet table.

In regard to what the member said, he talked about issues—

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Talk to the federal Liberals.

Mr Peters: I've talked to the federal Liberals more than your own members have. Let's talk about some of the issues.

The member talks about all these wonderful things about health care, but he doesn't address the issue of the doctor shortages that exist all over this province. We've got representatives from the University of Western Ontario here today. The University of Western Ontario has raised its tuition for medical school by 40%. It has raised it for its first-year admissions to \$14,000. That isn't being addressed by this government. The shortage of nurses in this province isn't being addressed by this government. There's still a tremendous shortage of nurses out there in this province.

There's an issue that's particular to my riding that I would hope the Minister of Health and the members so concerned about health would speak to. A report has just been completed on the Mennonite community in my

riding. The Mennonite community is a unique population in southwestern Ontario that is drastically underserved. I would hope the Minister of Health would recognize some of the shortages and issues that face that community.

But let's talk too about accountability. It's been four months since we've sat in this Legislature, yet we have a Premier who during those four months, instead of being on a golf course, could have been travelling around this province doing that same road show he's doing now, but of course he chose not to. He chooses to avoid coming to the Legislature and being accountable to the citizens of Ontario. We're not seeing that accountability from this government.

I'm also very disturbed that there's no clear commitment to an Ontarians with Disabilities Act by this government: a promise made, a promise broken by Mike Harris.

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

Mr Spina: Thank you, members from St Catharines, Niagara Centre, the Minister of Community and Social Services and, with due respect, the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London, although I take his comments probably most to task.

The Premier tracked more mileage in the four months that we were not in this House than I would suggest your leader did.

Mr Peters: Where? In Florida?

Mr Spina: You talk about accountability in finances. Why don't you check the expenses? That will tell you where the Premier has been on behalf of the residents and citizens of this province. That's the consultation, because he was out talking to the people of this province. He will travel this province from Cornwall to Kenora, from Ottawa to Windsor, and I'll put his travel record, talking to the people of Ontario, up against your party as a whole at any time. That will be the challenge.

I want to tell you about the doctor shortages and nurse shortages. We put money into adding more medical health spaces to the universities of this province than anybody has in the last eight years. Check those figures. That's where the dollars have gone. There's going to be a new doctor facility in northern Ontario. Everybody, including the ministers from the opposition parties when they were in government, talked about the medical school they were going to put in northern Ontario. You know what? We put our money where our mouth is. There is going to be a medical school in northern Ontario and it's going to be bricks and mortar. In addition to that, it's going to have a satellite unit with another university: two service facilities for doctors and nurses in northern Ontario. That will work. That's what happens. That's what we do. This government puts its money where its mouth is and delivers to the people of this province.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): May I first indicate that I will be sharing my time with the member from Davenport.

I'm very proud that I'm here representing Algoma-Manitoulin, a constituency of about 86,000 square kilometres. I saw our visitors from Estonia, and I suspect that Algoma-Manitoulin is many square kilometres larger than the country of Estonia.

Mr Ruprecht: About eight times.

Mr Brown: My friend says it's about eight times larger than Estonia. So it's a very large and important piece of real estate in this province. It's a constituency that stretches from Killarney to Manitowadge and Hornepayne, from Chapleau and Missanabie down to Meldrum Bay in the south. Having been out in the constituency for those four months, I know well what the concerns of the people are. They're economic concerns. We have Algoma Steel in Sault Ste Marie, but the constituency of Algoma-Manitoulin completely surrounds Sault Ste Marie. Many of the folks I represent either work at Algoma Steel or are beneficiaries of some of the contracts; \$150 million worth of services and goods are bought by Algoma Steel every year. It's important, and the people in the constituency are obviously concerned, as the restructuring goes on, that Algoma Steel will come out of this as a vibrant and important part of the economy. The economy of all of Algoma and certainly all of northern Ontario, I dare say all of Ontario, would be severely impacted by a bad result at Algoma Steel in Sault Ste Marie.

I would also tell you that Algoma-Manitoulin is one of the large producers of wood products. Members would know, at least members should know, that the market for softwood lumber is extraordinarily weak at this time. That means we have shifts that have been cancelled at a number of our mills. We have an ongoing strike at the Domtar plant at Nairn Centre which I am assured is aggravated by the fact that the supply of softwood lumber in the North American market is too high for the demand and that there isn't as much incentive on the part of many people as there should be to settle this. Those are causing grave difficulties in the constituency. I did not hear a word in the speech from the throne delivered last Thursday that addressed any of those concerns.

Last evening I had the opportunity at an event to be speaking with an assessment lawyer. That's maybe one of the interesting things: you meet people at these events. He told me that Bill 140 and the seven or eight preceding assessment bills in this province should more properly be entitled the assessment lawyers' pension act, because they are providing just an absolutely huge amount of money to assessment lawyers as folks and companies in this province fight their way through the assessment problem.

I wanted to bring that up because we have one particular situation in the constituency that I think all members would be appalled at. In Bill 140 there was a provision regarding the assessment of hydroelectric dams. That provision had the effect on the township of Michipicoten, the town of Wawa—many members would know—of reducing their revenue for municipal purposes by 44%; 44% of this municipality's revenue evaporated

with Bill 140. The government has said that they will offset this loss in revenue and that the municipality will not suffer because of the drop in assessment. The government, however, has not indicated to the municipality how that will happen.

Mr Speaker, you know something about municipal councils, and you would know that at this time of year you are trying to set a budget. You would know that you have to understand how much revenue you actually have and when it will flow. To be in a position where the municipality of Michipicoten does not know when or if the 44% of their revenue is coming causes more than grave concern in that particular municipality.

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I have written to the minister on several occasions—to the former minister, Mr Eves, and then to Mr Flaherty—and received an assurance that everything will be fine. We do not know, however, whether or not the money will actually flow. I think it's incumbent upon the government to resolve these kinds of issues immediately. It is unfair and unwise to put a municipality in a situation where almost half their revenue is gone and they don't know when they will see redress for that.

There is also a redevelopment by Great Lakes Power. I want to help my friend from Timmins-James Bay. He should know that Algoma Steel actually receives its electricity not from Ontario Hydro, but from Great Lakes Power.

Interjection.

Mr Brown: It probably does, but the main reason I mention that is they have a dam they're redeveloping in the High Falls area that will obviously increase the assessment of Great Lakes Power in the area quite considerably. The good folks in Wawa are wondering, seeing as that's announced, if they will receive an offset in revenues from the provincial government to reflect the increased value of this hydroelectric facility near Wawa.

One of the issues I think we all wanted to hear resolved is the northern health travel grant. I myself have presented petitions from thousands upon thousands of constituents. They signed them in Meldrum Bay, they signed them in Dubreuilville, they signed them in Elliot Lake, they signed them in Blind River, they signed them in Iron Bridge.

Thousands of people are concerned, and they're legitimately concerned, because we know that access to quality health care is something all Ontarians need to have. We know that in northern Ontario a large impediment to receiving that care is the distances our patients and their families have to travel to get that care.

To have a situation where a travel grant is worth a huge amount more if you happen to be going from the south to the north, rather than from the north to the south, offends every northern Ontario person. The whole northern travel grant system is cut into by the total unfairness, by the fact many families can't access the care they need because of the distances involved.

Manitouwadge is about a four-and-a-half hour or five-hour car ride in good weather from either Thunder Bay or

Sault Ste Marie. That is where those patients have to go. If you're a senior in Manitouwadge, it costs real money to get to the specialist in Thunder Bay or Sault Ste Marie.

For the government not to address this problem in the speech from the throne is offensive to all northern folks and, I assume, all Ontarians. When you represent a constituency that is eight times the size of some European countries, you would understand the problems we have with accessing this care.

I have quite a number of other issues, but I don't have quite the amount of time, so I will at this point relinquish the floor to my friend from Davenport.

Mr Ruprecht: I want to thank my friend from Algoma-Manitoulin for passing on part of his time to me. I want to assure you at the same time, Mr Speaker, that we're not here simply to criticize, that we want to be as constructive as we possibly can be, and sometimes that is reflected in the fact that we vote with the government.

The reason I support Dalton McGuinty as leader of the party, as leader of the Liberals, is very simple. On a continuous basis, Dalton McGuinty reminds us that we want to be co-operating, that we want to be not just critical, that we want to be constructive. That's one of the great attributes this man has. That's why I'm a firm believer in our Liberal principles and a good follower of his.

But at the same time, while we want to be constructive, it is clear that when the government makes a mistake, then it's incumbent on us to hold the government accountable. Isn't that true? I know you want to be held accountable because otherwise we would not be doing our job.

The first critique has to be made: it is true that when this government took office, one of the first things it did was to fire nurses. OK, they didn't fire them, but they cut back in terms of the money. Then they said, "Sorry, we've got no money, you've got to go."

Interjection: They fired them.

Mr Ruprecht: It's the same thing as saying, "Let's fire them." That was a mistake, but to this day I have to hear either an apology or at least a thought of saying, "We were wrong; maybe we should look at this again," or have the nurses been all rehired again because we need them so desperately? We chased them out and now we want them back.

Why? Simply because some bureaucrat or some smart kid in the back of the Premier's ear was saying, "You know what we should do? We should cut back and we should save some money."

The point is simply this: when criticism is granted, it should be taken in the spirit in which it is provided. I only hope that later on, when the government has an opportunity to respond, I might even hear an apology if they are so big as to give one.

In any case, let's look at the second point I want to make today. The good people of Davenport are asking me, "How come that when my mother or my father or my kid is being picked up by an emergency vehicle, there is no hospital in that area?" There used to be one. It was

called Northwestern General Hospital. Today, it's shut down.

Why? Is it because the good people of Davenport, or the west of Toronto, moved out? Is it because there's been an exodus, or is it simply because the health care providers did a better job and the hospital is no longer necessary, or maybe the numbers of people dropped off in terms of not being able to get the health care they needed? No. The point is simply this: we want to save money; we want to cut back.

I don't want to get into the issue of why we want to save the money. I don't want to get into the issue that we want to help some people in terms of the tax cut and the downloading. I don't wish to talk about that today. What I wish to talk about, because there may be just one opportunity here, is to put some sense into why this was done, because to this point the people of Davenport still do not know—there are more hospitals in the west end that were shut down—specifically why this specific hospital, Northwestern, was shut down.

Mr Speaker, I know it would be tough if your family were to be picked up by an emergency vehicle and it had one place to go, one hospital, and that hospital was full, and that hospital said, "The emergency ward is full. We cannot take you. Please, drive with your loved one to another hospital." What would you do? Of course, you'd go like crazy to the next hospital. Again, that hospital said, "I'm sorry, we're full. Go to the next hospital."

Now some people might say I'm over-dramatizing, but I'm not. We have the exact number of days in the west end of Toronto where this happens, day after day, certainly in the year 1998-99 on a number of occasions, and this is simply unacceptable to Ontarians.

We're saying to this government, look again. I know you're spending more money now on health care, to be fair. I'm at least to some degree convinced you're trying to do the best you can under the circumstances. But to some degree you must accept the responsibility that you were wrong. Some of the tax cuts, where you were shifting the money around, were wrong because they have led us into an area that is unacceptable to Ontarians: firing nurses and closing hospitals—

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It isn't only firing nurses and closing hospitals. The third item also happened in the west end of Toronto, which I represent, and that is closing schools. I know the government will say to me, "We didn't close any schools directly." No, but you can close almost anything by cutting off the money supply. So the Toronto District School Board said, "We're forced to close these schools because the government took out almost \$1 billion in Ontario. I hear no government members saying, "No." I hear nothing from the government benches. Almost \$1 billion is taken out of the education program and not a peep from the government benches. They're just following the Pied Piper right into cutbacks.

I know that some of the members over there, who are having a good time right now, also have had experiences of school closures and cutbacks. I know they've had that.

They've had to deal with them in the way I would have to deal with mine, I guess. But the point is that this did not have to take place. The reason this did not have to take place is simple: the funding formula was wrong. I'll say it again: the funding formula was simply wrong. If the funding formula had been changed, we would not be faced with as many school closures as we are today.

To give you one example—Mr Speaker, you were in the chair; you recognized me earlier—today I read a petition from hundreds of irate residents who were stuck with a closed school. What to do next? Do we give it off? Do we provide it to some corporation who can come in and redecorate the place? Do we sell it to another school? In this case, the Toronto Catholic school board wanted to buy that school, and the Toronto District School Board did not want to sell it to them or give it to them. Instead, they gave it to someone else. The point is that all of this was not necessary, because if the funding formula for the Toronto District School Board had been changed, we would have been saved. We would not have had conflicting problems, and our community would not have been at war.

That's my second point: the community would not have been at war. This government has struck out in terms of pushing people into confrontation on a continuous basis. There isn't the idea of, "Let's all sit down together and try to work it out." No. That's not what this is all about. "Let's go in and fight and push them to the limit." The government has pushed the business sector in the west end of Toronto to the limit where they have no choice but to get out, man the barricades, throw up their signs, close their businesses and demonstrate. That's the only way this government, even to some degree, began to listen. Why? Because they knew they were wrong. They knew that with a new agenda, a lot of businesses would have had to close. That was dramatic.

So for the first time in the history of Toronto we've had hundreds of businesspeople going out and demonstrating and showing the government, "We're going to revolt because of your specific projects. If you don't cut the taxes, we're going to shut our businesses, we're going to go to Queen's Park and we're going to start a revolution." That was the only way this government began to open its ears and make some changes. So I say, stop the confrontation and start the co-operation, because that is what the people demand.

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr Bisson: For that party to talk about consistency, I think, is a bit galling. After we saw what happened in this House this afternoon, where they voted in favour of an issue on a voice vote but opposite when it came to an actual recorded vote, I don't know. I don't even want to go there. I just think it's kind of something.

I want to comment on the comments by my colleague from northern Ontario, Mr Brown. One of the things he talked about—and he's right—is the whole issue of what's happening in communities across this province when it comes to the cost of doing business in Ontario,

and specifically hydro. Where we're at now is that we've got a government that has decided blindly on an ideological principle that all it wants to do is privatize hydro because that's the ideologically right-wing thing to do. They're not looking at the practicality of what's going to happen.

We know what the California and Alberta experiences have seen. Not only have they had energy shortages in California and are heading that way in Alberta, but it's also been an issue of price. We've got a 100% increase in price in Alberta as a direct result of both deregulation and privatization, and in California it's even gone above that. So I say to myself as a person from northern Ontario, where I understand that the cost of doing business is substantially higher because of the transportation costs and energy costs in the north, that whenever a government moves a way of making energy costs higher, it's going to be a job killer.

I say to this government that if it's serious in its throne speech about doing something to create jobs and strengthen the economy, it would seem to me that this government would try to strengthen those things that are the underpinning of our economy. Hydro was developed as a basis of delivering cheap power at cost on a reliable system. That's what it did for a number of years. We already know that privatization is leading to a 20% increase. For companies like Falconbridge, Abitibi and others, it's going to be a real problem economically. It will be a job killer.

Mr Galt: I was listening very attentively to the members from the Liberal party making their presentations, and I think the member from Timmins-James Bay was sort of summing up their inconsistency very well. It's rare that I'm able to agree with something that comes from the NDP caucus, but certainly the recognition of their speeches and their actions—consistently inconsistent. All I can say is that they're typical Liberals, and what else would you expect other than that?

I heard the member from Hamilton East talking about the education formula. Just imagine if the education formula hadn't come in—

Interjection.

Mr Galt: Did I get the wrong riding?

Interjection.

Mr Galt: Your riding, anyway. Sorry, I did get the wrong riding. My apologies.

Mr Ruprecht: It's Davenport.

Mr Galt: Davenport. Thank you.

You were talking about the education formula and the situation we're in. Imagine the situation we'd be in if we didn't bring in that education formula. Do you remember what municipal councils and seniors were calling for in the 1970s, 1980s and the early 1990s? "Stop that spiralling education tax on our property." It was spiralling out of sight. If we hadn't brought in the education formula, if we hadn't frozen that education tax, imagine where it would be today.

I want to comment quickly on the member from Brampton East and his comments about hospitals and

how he had a promise in their area from the Liberals and it didn't happen. We never got a promise from the NDP. I can tell you the Trenton Memorial Hospital had a promise from the Liberals. They had a promise from the NDP. Neither government came through with a hospital until our party took government in 1995. Shortly thereafter, a new hospital was approved and, lo and behold, a new one was built. I can tell you I was very proud to be part of that opening last November.

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): Je dois féliciter le député d'Algoma-Manitoulin pour ses paroles en réponse au discours du trône de jeudi dernier. Notre député a dit vrai : actuellement, ce gouvernement a complètement failli encore une autre fois. Il a complètement oublié de toucher les familles à faible revenu, les familles qui doivent se rendre au marché du travail à tous les jours.

Une des choses les plus importantes dans le secteur rural est tout d'abord l'énergie, l'électricité. Nous avons quelques industries majeures dans notre région, mais actuellement, avec la déréglementation avec laquelle le gouvernement veut procéder, sans aucune garantie aux Ontariens et Ontariennes, le prix de l'énergie peut augmenter de 20 %. Là, on parle seulement de l'hydro, mais si je regarde au gaz naturel, nous parlons des augmentations qui peuvent aller jusqu'à 51 %. Je vais vous donner un exemple.

Actuellement, tel que mon collègue d'Algoma-Manitoulin a mentionné, nous avons une industrie dans notre région à l'Original, Ontario, qui emploie plus de 700 employés. Actuellement, sa facture d'hydro est au-delà de 25 millions de dollars par année. Avec 20 % d'augmentation à ce que nous avons déjà, analysez l'augmentation que nous allons voir : 5 millions de dollars d'augmentation par année. Est-ce qu'on va pouvoir continuer à être compétitif ? Je regarde le gaz naturel : la même chose, 51 %. On nous dit qu'il dépense au delà—de 4 millions de dollars par année, donc à 51 %, on parle d'un autre deux millions de dollars.

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Mais la chose qu'on a oubliée de regarder aussi : l'éducation dans le secteur rural. Actuellement, la formule de financement que nous avons en place est complètement en dehors de la route. Quand je dis « complètement en dehors de la route », on ne peut pas venir en aide aux institutions scolaires dans notre région, dû au fait du manque de fonds nécessaires pour administrer comme nous le devons. Une autre fois, nous avons failli.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions.

Mr Kormos: A few moments ago I commented on the incredibly disastrous impact that this government's huge increase in electricity rates is going to have on heavy industry down in Niagara, on places like General Motors, Atlas Specialty Steels in Welland, the Carborundum factory—and that's after the Niagara region has been gutted as a result of this government's policies and its failure to respond to the crisis in heavy industry in southern Ontario.

It's been during this government's helmsmanship that Gallaher Paper—gone; Union Carbide—gone; layoffs at General Motors; the risk of a reduced workforce at Atlas steels. These are major employers, and the loss of industry and the failure of this government to respond has created disasters for those communities down in Niagara region—Welland, Thorold, Pelham, St Catharines—as well as for the families that supported themselves by their hard work in those industries.

Let's talk for a minute about apartment dwellers down in Niagara region. Many of them tend to be senior citizens. Many of those apartment buildings tend to be electrically heated. Why? Because electrical heating is far cheaper to install. I don't approve of that, but it's far cheaper to install for the operators building these apartment buildings and then renting them out and trying to maximize their profits. We all know it's incredibly expensive now to heat your home with electricity. The people who live in those apartments down on Denistown, just down the road from my house, those four tall buildings, know it's incredibly expensive come winter months with electric heat, as it has been. This government's going to impose huge new costs on them, many of them senior citizens. Don't you guys understand what you're doing to these folks, to these senior citizens, to these hard-working young families that are struggling as it is? How low do you expect them to turn the heat? Good God. Have you no shame? Have you no interest in the voters of this province?

The Acting Speaker: The member for Algoma-Manitoulin has two minutes to respond.

Mr Brown: I first want to thank the members for Timmins-James Bay, Northumberland, mon ami le député de Glengarry-Prescott-Russell and Niagara Centre for their consideration.

I want to tell you, it is amazing to me that the government laid off 10,000 nurses or more, spent \$400 million providing severance packages for those good folks, and then tells us there's a shortage of nurses in this province and that they're restructuring. Remember, we restructured health care in this province under you guys two, three, four years ago—the famous hospital destruction commission. It was your plan for health care that's on the rocks. It's your plan that is providing health care that is nowhere near what it was 10 years ago in this province. Just ask yourself, is health care better in the province of Ontario in 2001 than it was 1990? The answer is, "Obviously not." Is education better in 2001 than it was in 1990? There is not a hope that that is true.

The government has continued its flimflam marketing junket. I just received in my office, and I think all members will, a living legacy kit. Did we get that? I wonder what that cost. I have beautiful CD disks. I don't know how many. It could be a gold record, I guess. There are pamphlets with Mike Harris's name on them. It's wonderful.

This was just a marketing effort. Let's govern this province and make working people better off.

The Acting Speaker: It being almost 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 am tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1756.

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