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**Assemblée législative
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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 1 May 2001

Mardi 1^{er} mai 2001

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 1 May 2001

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 1^{er} mai 2001

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

EVENTS IN FLAMBOROUGH AND ANCASTER

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): Today is a very important day in the riding of Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot, as we celebrate two wonderful events.

First, in the town of Flamborough, a town I know quite well, we will open the new Flamborough Family YMCA, a wonderful partnership project between the town of Flamborough and the Hamilton-Burlington Y. The new family Y is a great example of a creative entrepreneurial partnership and a living testament that those who are committed to putting their community first can accomplish together what neither could do apart.

As a snotty-nosed north end kid growing up through the YMCA who served as an overseas YMCA volunteer and later as YMCA president, I know first-hand the difference the YMCA has made in building strong people, strong families and strong, healthy communities both in Flamborough and across Ontario.

After opening our family Y, I will have the pleasure of travelling to the historic town of Ancaster to help celebrate the life and work of the Ancaster Rotary Club and three very special Ancaster Rotarians who will receive the Rotarians' highest honour, the Paul Harris Fellowship.

Notwithstanding whatever is wrong with Ontario, it's clear that what's right with Ontario is our people, people committed to the sharing, caring and daring that it takes to build the strong and healthy communities we all cherish.

NOVATRONICS

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I rise in the Legislature today to recognize a company in my riding that recently watched its knowledge and expertise go up in space. Novatronics of Canada is a Stratford company that designs, develops and manufactures products for the aerospace and defence industries. Novatronics made a significant contribution to the new Canadarm2 that blasted into space two weeks ago on board the space

shuttle Endeavour with Canadian astronaut Chris Hadfield. This Stratford company, established in 1955, designed and built 12 pineapple-sized motor modules that allowed the Canadarm to move, bend and lock into place. These modules also helped the 1,600-kilogram arm move large and small objects with pinpoint accuracy. Novatronics technology also allowed Canadarm2 to reach parts of the ever-expanding space station that couldn't be reached by the original Canadarm, now almost 20 years old.

I want to take this opportunity to commend Novatronics chairman Don McDougall and his 75 employees for their innovation, engineering expertise and product development. Designing and building technology that is accepted and used by NASA is quite an accomplishment.

I also want to congratulate Novatronics on recently receiving an Ontario Global Traders Award for its 54% growth in exports over the last two years and for its contributions to the global aerospace industry.

Thank you very much for congratulating Novatronics.

NURSES

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I rise today to pay tribute to Ontario's nurses. In recent months I've had the occasion to use Ontario's health care system to a greater degree than perhaps I would have liked, but during this time I have been fortunate to have been in the care of many wonderful nurses who continue to perform their essential services despite the many pressures that have been placed upon them.

Unfortunately, we are still hearing reports of labour shortages. The government's claim that they have rehired the nurses needed is deceiving. Nursing organizations are reporting to us that 50% of jobs now contracted out are either part-time or casual. This is how the government has maintained a large headcount, but only half of our nurses are full-time positions and the labour shortages remain a fact of life.

Many overworked nurses on the front lines are burned out. Many are leaving the province and indeed the country altogether.

The opportunity is there. A recent poll showed that over 78% of the nurses who had left Ontario would consider returning if conditions were right. The same poll showed that the number one concern for nurses was the availability of full-time work.

I am happy to report to my colleagues that my experience with Ontario's nurses shows they continue to be

outstanding and dedicated to their particular profession. I think it's incumbent upon the government to immediately hire the needed nurses so that they can continue to perform their important work in our health care system.

PROTECTION OF RESOURCES

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I know there are a lot of good citizens who think the Premier of this province is not a nice man, that in fact he can be tough. Well, it's true. There are a whole lot of citizens who think that, but I have to tell you there are two people across the border who are not seen as nice men; in fact, they're seen as bad, bad men.

When we think of Mike Harris as a bad wolf, big papa wolf is right around the corner, right around that border, and they're just waiting to come into Canada. Papa Bush and Papa Cheney are coming. The citizens know these guys are oilmen and they want to come into the northern regions of Canada—in their part of the world Alaska, but also our country and our provinces—and they want to suck the precious resources out of this country. So when we see Mike Harris and Klein ready to privatize, to sell off our public resources, sell off to the special friends that you boys have, you ain't seen nothing yet, because Papa Bush and Papa Cheney are coming around and they're saying, "We're ready to suck away the energies from you." What are Klein and people like Bush and the federal Liberal government saying? "At your orders, Papa Bush and Papa Cheney."

I've got to tell you, good citizens of Ontario, we need you. Someone's got to prevent this from happening. We need an active citizenry to prevent this, and I'm urging you to fight back against it.

PRISONER WORK PROGRAM

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Today I'm tabling a resolution asking the Legislature of Ontario to take immediate measures to expand the prisoner work program to more highways and neighbourhoods across Ontario.

I believe the expansion of this type of program is beneficial to the community and to the prisoner. It gives an offender the chance to give back to society and learn the value of a hard day's work. As well, offenders get a chance to keep their minds occupied with healthy, law-abiding ideas such as participating in the community. They are learning the value that individual organizations are to their communities as well.

1340

An example can be seen in my home riding of Simcoe North, where inmates at Project Turnaround have had the opportunity to work at the Huronia Museum, Coldwater Mill and Fairgrounds and the Midland Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

Working in these environments has given the young offenders an opportunity to expand their learning and a chance to give back to the community. Inmates assigned

to work on the prisoner work program are carefully screened, are low risk and do not pose a threat to the safety and security of the community. I believe in making sure those who commit crimes repay their debt to society.

A couple of prisoner work programs that already exist are the prisoner work program, in co-operation with the Ministry of Transportation, which benefits the environment at nominal cost to taxpayers and supports tourism. The program helps to create a clean, attractive landscape and gives offenders a chance to participate in a meaningful, constructive, outdoor activity as a way of giving something back to the community. Last August, the Ministry of Correctional Services announced a partnership with the Toronto Police Service community response unit to paint over walls that had been defaced by graffiti, as part of the graffiti eradication program.

I believe the prisoner work program is important for communities, as well as our offenders. I urge all members in this House to support and adopt this resolution.

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): We in the official opposition welcome the opportunity today to question Premier Harris. Our understanding is that he will be attending question period today. We are delighted, because we haven't had that opportunity since December.

You know what? In January, February and March, my leader, Dalton McGuinty, was travelling this province, meeting with people, doing radio shows and talking to the average people in Ontario. Last week and the week before, Dalton McGuinty was doing interviews outside of this city. He was travelling this province and he was doing an effective job as Leader of the Opposition and the next Premier of Ontario. That's what real leadership's all about.

Dalton McGuinty has put forward plans on a number of fronts: doctor shortages, emergency rooms, classroom size, peace in our schools. Is it any wonder the Premier doesn't want to answer questions from Dalton McGuinty?

The real leadership in this province today is coming from Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals. It's coming in the way of rejecting the old ideas of the past that never worked, rejecting the neo-Conservative agenda of a Premier who would rather be in Florida golfing than in Ontario answering tough questions.

This agenda's about accountability. The real accountability will be when Dalton McGuinty becomes Premier of Ontario in two and half long years and shows what real leadership's about. It's about being accountable and being answerable to all the people of Ontario.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): I rise today to inform the House that May is Sexual Assault Prevention Month in Ontario. This government wants to stress that

we will not tolerate violence against women. We are committed to preventing this violence. In this year alone, we are investing \$140 million in programs and services that prevent and address violence against women, more funding than any previous government has dedicated toward combatting this crime. Make no mistake: violence against women is a crime.

Our community partners are invaluable to our strategy to wipe out violence against women. In just these last few weeks, we have announced a total of \$3.5 million for community-based organizations and projects that are assisting women.

I invite all the members to take part in the activities that sexual assault centres are planning throughout Ontario communities to mark this month. I know that in my own community, the Women's Sexual Assault Centre of York Region will be conducting outreach and public education in the schools this month to increase awareness about sexual assault prevention. This centre plays a very important role in our region, and I want to acknowledge the contribution they are making to addressing this issue.

Every woman has the right to live in safety. Together with our community partners, this government will continue to work toward that goal.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): Recently in this House we were afforded a chance to hear from the government on the theme of their throne speech: accountability. Yet we see in the days since then that the government will not walk the talk. They talk all about accountability, 11 references to it, in the government, and yet I was there in London last week when the Premier had an opportunity to field a question from a real person, a gentleman who had a problem around the health care of his child, and the Premier could no sooner jump in his Suburban and thrust the unsuspecting constituent into the hands, into the loving embrace, of the members from London.

This is one more example of a Premier who will not be held accountable for the actions of his government. It's in sharp contrast to the federal government, which has met regularly since the beginning of the year, and a Prime Minister who, in addition to going to China, was in the House of Commons for almost 60% of the question periods, being held accountable on difficult issues, while this Premier has run about the province, hiding from the accountability he likes to speak about.

We will have an opportunity shortly to hold him accountable, to ask him the difficult questions he has been avoiding these past days. We see that they continue to talk about accountability, that they continue to raise it as a theme, but they will not stand in support of it.

I challenge them to defy their constituents and the desire of their constituents to hold the government accountable and support my private member's bill this Thursday, which calls for 60% attendance of the Premier and cabinet ministers in question period.

CRIME PREVENTION

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I am pleased to inform the Legislature that today the city of Niagara Falls will host the second annual Tourism Safety and Crime Prevention Conference.

The focus of the conference is to discuss crime prevention issues in both the business and tourism sectors. Last year, and this year again, Detective Ray Wood, director of the Orange county sheriff's office in Orlando, Florida, will facilitate the conference. Toronto Police Chief Julian Fantino will attend as lunch keynote speaker.

Topics that will be addressed at this year's conference include shoplifting, counterfeiting, fraud, computer crime fraud, ID fraud, crime prevention through environmental design and the outlawing of motorcycle clubs.

In regard to the issue of biker gangs, in January 2001 this government urged the federal government to establish a mandatory minimum sentence for organized criminal activity to help fight organized crime and biker gangs.

With a federal Liberal government that's soft on crime, it is impressive to see the province and local governments making public safety a priority.

I commend Niagara Falls city councillor Carolynn Ioannoni and the other organizers involved on the great effort that has been put into this event both last year and again this year.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I beg leave to present a report on pre-budget consultations, 2001, un rapport sur les consultations prébudgétaires pour l'année 2001, from the standing committee on finance and economic affairs, and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr Beaubien: I would like to inform the House that the standing committee on finance and economic affairs held pre-budget meetings in Ottawa, London, Thunder Bay and Toronto.

There is not much time to debate the issue, but I would like to recognize and thank the members, the staff and all the presenters.

With this, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker: Mr Beaubien moves adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

REMEDIES FOR ORGANIZED CRIME
AND OTHER UNLAWFUL
ACTIVITIES ACT, 2001LOI DE 2001 SUR LES RECOURS
POUR CRIME ORGANISÉ
ET AUTRES ACTIVITÉS ILLÉGALES

Mr Young moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 30, An Act to provide civil remedies for organized crime and other unlawful activities / Projet de loi 30, Loi prévoyant des recours civils pour crime organisé et autres activités illégales.

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.

The Attorney General for a short statement?

Hon David Young (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): Mr Speaker, I'll make my statement during the ministers' statement period.

1350

LABOUR RELATIONS
AMENDMENT ACT, 2001LOI DE 2001 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL

Ms Martel moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 31, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 / Projet de loi 31, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail.

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

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): It's fitting that I reintroduce this private member's bill today on International Workers' Day because the purpose of the bill is to ban the use of scab labour in Ontario.

It restores those sections of the NDP government's Bill 40 that prevented employers from using other workers to replace those legitimately on strike or locked out. It forces employers to sit down and bargain collective agreements because they know that no one else can take the jobs of those striking workers. It protects management and employees from employer reprisal when they refuse the work of bargaining sector employees on strike or lockout.

I originally introduced this bill on behalf of Mine Mill/CAW workers in my community who were on strike almost seven months and who experienced the use of scab labour by Falconbridge from day one of that strike. While that strike is over, this bill is needed by every other worker who is being undermined by their employer in the same way.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Hon David Young (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): It gives me great pleasure to rise today in the House to address the 19th step in our government's action plan to keep Ontario strong: enhancing community safety and victims' rights.

All Ontarians have a right to personal safety and security. Each person should be able to attend school and walk along the streets of this province without fear. They should all be able to expect to be safe and secure in their homes, in their businesses and in the communities of this province.

Over the past five and a half years, the Mike Harris government has taken great strides to ensure that Ontarians can not only be safe but feel safe.

We know there is still a great deal more that need be done. That is why our government will introduce further measures to enhance victims' rights and keep Ontario streets and Ontario communities safe from crime. We do this fundamentally to enhance the personal safety and security of the people of this province.

As a government, we are also aware of the broader benefits that come from safe communities and what they offer to economic growth and our quality of life.

Alongside fiscal responsibility and accountability, our government's priority is economic growth and the creation of jobs. Our government's policies have led to more than 822,000 net new jobs. More than 578,000 people have escaped welfare. And in the last two years, Ontario's economy has outperformed that of any other nation in the G7.

Businesses are expanding and they are fuelling greater investment throughout this province. But business people want their employees to be safe. They want to lock the door of their premises at night and know that all will be as they left it the next morning. Businesses must feel safe and secure in their daily operations in order to prosper and grow.

Business growth and the resulting economic development is absolutely vital to Ontario's continued success, for it is through its strong economy and new jobs that Ontarians gain hope, opportunity and prosperity. It is through a strong economy that government can support the services that mean so much to the people of this great province, like quality health care and excellence in education.

A safe Ontario is indeed a strong, growing and competitive Ontario. Our government will continue to make the tough decisions needed to keep this province on the right track. We will make the right choices to keep our communities, our streets, our people safe.

We will also ensure that victims' rights are respected throughout. That is why my first announcement today is that the government will introduce legislation to help protect children caught in the misery of prostitution.

Our children are our future. Our responsibility includes caring for them and helping them grow into healthy, contributing adults. Protecting them from danger is our obligation. There should be no doubt that protecting them from sexual exploitation must be a priority. We all react with horror when we hear or read of children being forced into prostitution, some as young as age 12. These young people are the victims of pimps, the victims of johns and other sexual predators who are engaging in a form of child sexual abuse. We must help them and we will help them.

Ontario's police and child care workers need more tools. They have said so. They need more tools to help these sexually exploited children and to protect them from further victimization. Through legislation, our government intends to provide these tools. We intend to help those most vulnerable begin a new life and protect them from the predators I mentioned earlier. Our government will always, always move to protect and to nurture the young people of this province.

Our government also intends to help victims of organized crime. My second announcement today: the government will introduce 21st-century solutions, ranging from civil tools to vigorous crown prosecutions, to respond to the modern challenges presented by organized crime.

Organized crime is indeed a significant problem. It is estimated that it costs the Canadian economy between \$5 billion and \$9 billion—that's billion dollars—each and every year. And organized crime is becoming increasingly sophisticated, using new technologies and new strategies to take advantage of every opportunity they can to make more and more money illegally.

Every day, crime victimizes honest, hard-working people across this province. That victimization takes place directly, by defrauding them of their hard-earned money, and indirectly, through higher consumer prices and service fees. It jeopardizes the safety and economic security of this great province. We need 21st-century solutions to fight it.

Already our government has allocated \$4 million for the strategic deployment of specialized police forces and dedicated legal resources to focus on organized crime. Earlier today I introduced legislation that, if passed by this Legislature, would disrupt these organizations and return their unlawful profits to the very people they have victimized whenever possible. And we plan to create a strike force of investigators, civil lawyers and forensic accountants to ensure that these civil cases are vigorously pursued in court.

Our government aims to help people who have been victimized by organized crime and any other unlawful activity. We aim to take the profit out of crime and to keep Ontario's communities safe.

Another criminal activity that is of great concern to this government—and it's particularly disturbing, I'm sure, to all members in this Legislature—is the rise in violent youth crime. Our government has consistently expressed a strong concern about Ottawa's need to create young offender legislation that provides meaningful

consequences for violent crimes. We do not, and I emphasize "do not," believe that the reintroduced federal legislation is adequate. In fact, it is woefully inadequate to deter violent youth crime or hold young people accountable for their conduct.

With this concern in mind, today I am announcing that the Crime Control Commission will consult on a variety of topics, including how sentencing and release policies affect repeat offenders, the impact of the federal young offenders law, opportunities to reduce crime through early intervention and finally, Mr Speaker, plans to address the very, very real concern that landlords and tenants have when they discover that a neighbouring tenant is engaged in illegal drug activities on the premises. We recognize the seriousness of this matter. I note that there is already an eviction process in place for drug dealers, but we are going to move to streamline the eviction of tenants who are conducting illegal drug activities. We intend to make that process even faster. All tenants should know that they are safe within their own homes.

Mr Speaker, these actions that I have announced today and that my colleagues will announce in a few moments will help ensure that victims' rights are enhanced throughout this province. They will help ensure that Ontario's streets and communities are safe. Our government will work hard toward a safe and prosperous Ontario for the benefit of all of the people in this great province.

1400

Hon David Turnbull (Solicitor General): I am pleased to join my colleagues the Attorney General, the Minister of Correctional Services and the Minister of Citizenship in outlining some of the actions the Mike Harris government is taking to ensure safe streets and safe communities.

Ontario families have a right to feel safe and secure in their communities. Since 1995 our government has made it clear where we stand. We're putting more police on the streets, we've increased support for victims of crime and we're cracking down on criminals. Let me remind you of some of the actions the Ministry of the Solicitor General has taken to ensure safe communities.

To make our streets safer, we have increased penalties for criminals who endanger the public by recklessly fleeing police.

To remove dangerous weapons from the streets and reduce confrontations with police, we've banned the sale of convertible starter pistols and placed strict limitations on the purchase, sale and transfer of imitation firearms.

To increase police visibility in the community, we've introduced the community policing partnership program. Under this program, we have allocated funding for 1,000 net new front-line police officers in communities right across Ontario.

Last week, to improve community safety and protect some of the most vulnerable members of society, we proclaimed Christopher's Law, creating Canada's first and only sex offender registry.

There are many more examples that I could cite: the work of the Ontario Provincial Police in combatting organized crime and outlaw biker gangs; or the office of the fire marshal's efforts to promote home fire safety; or Emergency Measures Ontario and its work in helping communities with disaster planning and preparation.

We've made significant progress but there's much more to be done. That's why today I am pleased to announce that we are meeting the commitments made in the throne speech and moving forward with two important initiatives.

In Ontario, we believe that young people should respect the law and the rights of others. We know the actions of violent young offenders have profound and long-lasting consequences for victims, families and communities. That's why we introduced strict discipline programs for young offenders. In Ontario, young people who break the law get a sharp lesson in the consequences, and we're turning many lives around as a result. Even though our positive efforts dealing with youth crime have been undercut by the inaction of the federal government, we are determined to do what we can at the provincial level to create safer communities and deter crimes committed by young people. That's why the government will implement a comprehensive youth justice strategy to help turn young offenders into responsible, law-abiding citizens.

Domestic violence is not tolerated in Ontario. All too often domestic violence against past or present partners escalates to deadly levels. To counter this, we have taken important action by creating the largest domestic violence court program of its kind in Canada, and we've expanded assistance to domestic violence victims and programs. We need to continue these efforts.

As we said in the Blueprint, victims and support workers in women's shelters need instant access to information about court dates. As well, support workers in women's shelters should be able to take a victim impact statement, or a record of a victim's concerns for their safety, and send it instantaneously into a prosecutor's case file. When bail conditions and restraining orders are imposed on domestic violence offenders, every police service in Ontario should have this information at their fingertips. To achieve these improvements, the government will link all shelters and rape crisis centres to the information technology of Ontario's justice system.

We should be able to walk in our neighbourhoods, live in our homes and send our children to school free from the fear of criminals.

With the initiatives announced today by my colleagues and I, we're continuing to make community safety a top priority. We are demonstrating our commitment to ensuring that public safety and the rights of law-abiding citizens come first.

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister of Correctional Services): Community safety is critical to our lives here in Ontario, and it's a critical component of our 21-step action plan. The Ministry of Correctional Services has begun the challenging process of replacing a system that

was for years neglected by previous governments. Through our infrastructure renewal program, we are replacing aging jails, some of which were built before this country became a country, with new ultra-modern institutions that will offer better results and better safety and security for the public and for the staff who are working in them.

We have implemented a zero tolerance policy for violence against correctional staff, a prisoner work program and the very successful Camp Turnaround, that has shown that strict discipline works.

We have listened to the people of Ontario who want safe streets and safe communities. We must now build upon these results so that Ontario can stay the right and safe course that it's now on.

Today I am announcing that the successful strict discipline program will be extended to adult offenders and young offenders. Our made-in-Ontario program works, and we must do more of it.

I'm also pleased to announce that we will introduce legislation that will permit victims to participate in parole hearings for those who have wronged them. The people of Ontario have consistently told us that there must be a better balance between the rights of victims and those who offend them. Victims have repeatedly asked for greater participation in the parole process so that there is a clear understanding of not only the effect of the crime on their lives, but also their fears and concerns about the release of those who have harmed them. It's clear, and I am certain everyone in this House will agree, that a victim's suffering does not end on the day that a crime is committed.

Accountability, growth and fiscal responsibility—together, these are the hallmarks of this government. As such, our ministry will continue to embrace these responsibilities as we meet the challenges of transforming a correctional system that has been ignored by previous governments. We will make the tough decisions, the right-thing-to-do decisions, in order to better protect and serve the citizens of Ontario. They have that right, and we intend to respect it.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): I'm pleased today to rise in support of this government's efforts to keep Ontario on a prosperous course. Building prosperity is all about seizing opportunity. A society that cherishes and promotes equal access to opportunity for its citizens is a society that will ultimately prosper.

Our government has a strong record of supporting measures that improve opportunities for people in this province. Since 1995, our government has introduced more than \$800 million worth of new programs and spent close to \$6 billion each year to expand opportunities for people with disabilities. We intend to sustain that effort.

The foundation for equal opportunity in this province is the Ontario Human Rights Code. But effective safe-

guarding of our right to live free from discrimination requires the presence of an effective rights guardian.

When this government was first elected six years ago, the Ontario Human Rights Commission was not an effective guardian. Waiting lists were too long and people waited for their outcomes. This government recognized the problem and committed to improving effective enforcement of the code. As a result, the Ontario Human Rights Commission has made significant changes, among them a new state-of-the-art case management system, a centralized, one-window service for inquiry and intake and a highly successful mediation service, improvements that are yielding excellent, expedient results. In 1995, when this government was elected, the average age of an open case was 15 months. Today it is less than 10.

To further remedy the situation, we appointed a new chair of the commission, with a mandate to overcome these issues and move the commission toward a new level of excellence in the service of the people of Ontario. I am proud to report that our efforts have been successful. The caseload is in hand, resolutions are being reached in a more timely fashion and the commission is able to turn more of its resources to pursuing systemic issues of discrimination in Ontario. The system is working better all the time.

1410

The Ontario Human Rights Commission is a strong foundation for equal opportunity in Ontario and sets one of the highest standards in all of Canada. But we know there is much more that we can be doing. The government recognizes that the Ontario Human Rights Commission plays a vital and ongoing role in protecting the rights of many in our society, including Ontarians living with disabilities. The government will continue to support the commission's efforts to ensure fair treatment and equal access to opportunity for citizens with disabilities and others whose rights it protects. As I said, the code is the foundation of equal opportunity in Ontario. Strengthening the code therefore will allow us to build upon the foundation to protect the rights and the dignity of society's most vulnerable members.

The chair of the Ontario Human Rights Commission has proposed legislative changes that will allow human rights to be protected more effectively and more efficiently. Based on a review of his recommendations, amendments to the Ontario Human Rights Code will be placed before the House.

In March 1999, as Minister of Long-Term Care with responsibility for seniors, I was pleased to make two announcements regarding the tragic issue of elder abuse. The first was our government's commitment to developing a comprehensive provincial strategy to combat elder abuse. The second was the formation of a round table to help us develop this leading-edge strategy.

When I recently took on responsibilities for seniors again as Minister of Citizenship, I asked the round table to finalize its work immediately. Today I am pleased to report the findings are complete.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. There are responses but I remind the other side we'll go right to zero for you as well then.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): A tired old re-announcement from a tired old government with no new ideas that's out of gas. Did you prorogue the House, have a cabinet shuffle and kill the bills so that new ministers can introduce old bills? Is that the point of this entire exercise?

I thought we were going to get something new today. "The government will introduce legislation to protect children caught in the misery of prostitution." Rick Bartolucci introduced those bills three years ago.

The government's going to reintroduce, reannounce and then kill the bill and reintroduce the organized crime bill. How many times can this government bring this bill back to the Legislature after killing it?

Is there anything from the Office for Victims of Crime in this statement, anything about the 71 recommendations in *A Voice for Victims*, victims of crime? Anything in this? No. Provincial victim service standards for victims: are we finally going to get them in Ontario? No. Do they at least proclaim the victims' rights amendment act so the office for victims' rights can use their statutory powers? No, didn't do that. Did they at least proclaim the Domestic Violence Protection Act so that the small minority of victims of domestic violence could in fact avail themselves of the few provisions in there? No, they didn't do that. Are they going to introduce the Baldwin committee recommendations so that victims of domestic violence can actually get some service from this government? No. Are victims of date rape in this province finally going to get the ability to go to a hospital or to their doctor and find out whether or not they've had a date rape drug slipped into their body? No. Anything about the five-point plan to recoup the cost of gun violence in the province of Ontario? No. Are we going to join the five other provinces in this country which already have mandatory victims' rights legislation? No.

When it comes to victims' rights, this government is all talk, all prop, all reannouncement and no action.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I'm amazed that this minister can keep a straight face while reading this document. For six years now, this government has committed to an ODA. It keeps giving lip service. The Ontario Human Rights Commission is not even close to an ODA. The human rights commission can deal with one complaint at a time. There are 1.5 million Ontarians with disabilities. Do the math. There is no way the human rights commission can even begin to address the concerns.

Live up to your commitment. Live up to your promise. Do an ODA in place by November 23. Take some time.

There are others in your party, Minister, who are out of the Legislature for days and months. Take some of your time and meet and consult with the Ontarians with disabilities. Live up to your commitment and your promise that all citizens in Ontario will be equal. No more smoke and mirrors; we need a meaningful, effective act in place now, as you voted for and your party committed to.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): The Minister of Correctional Services wants us to believe that something new is happening. This minister who talks the talk about rehabilitation programs has yet to plan for all of these new rehabilitation programs.

He is closing Burtch Correctional Centre in Brant, which was one of the homes of the most extensive and successful rehabilitation programs in the province; as a matter of fact, so much so that in 1988 it was deemed the best program in Ontario, and he is closing it. Why? His government is gutting it because they need to make room for private enterprise in correctional services. They're going to privatize these programs for rehabilitative services that have been the best in the province and, as a matter of fact, were watched across the world.

Let's find out about the boot camps. Are they successful? Absolutely not. Three studies—one in the United States Congress, one an international study and one in the city of Toronto—said that boot camps were the number one reason why failure took place in dealing with youth justice issues.

Let me tell you something else about boot camps. This is coming from the minister who, for no good reason, as told by the Provincial Auditor, hands over \$400,000 extra to hold up Camp Run Amok and make it successful, along with the fact that another \$25,000 was found by the auditor—the government didn't even know there were bills to be paid and had to pay an extra \$25,000. So much for private enterprise being able to run our system.

I need to finish off with one point, to make an announcement. The people of Ontario are going to be on the hook for hundreds, and maybe millions, of dollars because under this particular government, inmates charged with serious offences, who were spending weekends in jail, went home and served their sentences in their living rooms because they closed the beds in our province's jails.

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

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Clearly, New Democrats are going to enthusiastically support any and all efforts that meaningfully and effectively combat crime, but I want to make it quite clear, as we did during committee hearings on this very same bill that was introduced today, that the fight against crime does not include an attack on innocent people here in Ontario.

This government's legislation, which is simply a rewrite of the legislation they killed, of their own accord,

as a result of proroguing, is so broad in scope and has such a low standard of proof for what is effectively the proof of criminal offences that it runs the risk of putting innocent Ontarians at great risk and at peril of being subjected to investigation and to confiscation and forfeiture of their property.

New Democrats will not participate in the creation of the foundation of what many, in response to this very legislation, have called the cornerstone of a police state. Let us make that very clear, and we are unequivocal in that regard.

We were there when the government wanted to pass Christopher's Law. In fact, we moved amendments. New Democrats wanted to amend Christopher's Law to make it tougher, to make it broader in scope, to ensure that every sexual offender in this province—adult and young offender—was included on that registry. The government defeated those amendments. New Democrats wanted to make Christopher's Law more effective; the government dug in its heels and said no.

New Democrats wanted to make the laws that involve the impounding and seizure of cars of suspended drunk drivers tougher and more meaningful. We passed amendments in committee to make that law more effective and more meaningful. The government dug in its heels and said no to making that law tougher.

New Democrats question this government's seriousness and sincerity when it comes to really fighting crime. This government does not have much of a track record. In fact, when its corporate environmental offender friends commit crimes, this government has shown incredible largesse. We heard remarkable testimony from one of the government's own provincial environmental ministry investigators who testified last week at the Walkerton inquiry that effective in 1995, investigators in the Ministry of the Environment were told effectively "Hands off" when it comes to the corporate environmental offenders, the corporate environmental criminals, the buddies of Harris and this government.

This government wants to talk a tough game on crime and on fighting crime. When it comes down to the real offenders and real measures, it wants to turn an equally blind eye.

1420

This government wants to talk about resolving outstanding issues. We'll raise once again your Victims' Bill of Rights, which was torn to shreds by Mr Justice Day here in the province of Ontario, who made it very clear that your Victims' Bill of Rights contains no rights and that in fact it would have to be rewritten. The Premier of this province promised before the last election that it would be rewritten. Another promise made, another promise broken, because we've survived now with but the remnants of a Victims' Bill of Rights that has no teeth, that has absolutely no enforceability.

You want to make women safer in this province, Premier? I tell you right now, New Democrats call for an immediate expansion of the assaulted women's hotline so that every woman in Ontario has access to that hotline.

You're going to make women safer by doing that, not by your platitudes here in this Legislature. You want to make women safer and make women feel safer in this province? You want to protect women from violent assault and from murders here in Ontario? Then give effect to the cross-sectoral strategy you've been presented with now in excess of not only months but years, which you've ignored and showed nothing but disdain for.

You want women to feel safer and you want women to be safer here in Ontario? You want to protect women from violent and vicious assault and from murders? Then restore the support for shelters and for second-stage housing here in Ontario.

You talk a big game about law and order and protecting the most vulnerable people in this province. After five years you still couldn't clean up the mess you made of the Family Responsibility Office, the family support plan that has left women and kids hungry year after year since your destruction of the nine regional offices in 1996. Rather than solve the problem, you've acknowledged your disinterest in addressing the problem by the Ministry of the Attorney General sloughing that off to the Ministry of Community and Social Services, where there'll be no relief for those women and children who are victims, not of criminals outside this Legislature but victims of this government.

This government better start looking at some of the real perpetrators of crime. I tell you, Premier, you and your colleagues are as guilty and as culpable as any biker, as any mobster, could be.

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I wish to seek unanimous consent of the House to give the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane an opportunity to apologize to the House for the regrettable statement he made yesterday afternoon during members' statements.

The Speaker: People will know the member can stand on his own point of order. I will say I have had the chance to review the transcript. While we don't go back a day later, I can tell you that if I had heard the comment, I would have made him withdraw it, as I did earlier in his statement.

As you know, we have a lot of school kids who come here and listen. I'm going to be very quick to jump up on comments that are out of order. The member can stand up on his own point of order, if he wishes to withdraw it, but in future I will be very quick and listen very intently, as will the table, because as you know, sometimes you're listening to the statement or the question and someone else will yell something out. Between all of us, we're going to be able to catch people.

I can say this very clearly: we're not going to let this place degenerate. I'm going to move very quickly. I thank the member for his point of order.

Mr Kormos: On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: I served you notice of my intention to rise on a point of privilege. I gave you the details of that point of privilege. I spoke specifically about the PC logo being advertised

on doorways and windows in this building, the stylized, commercial, Conservative Party logo attached to windows, specifically in the north wing entrance—very partisan advertising.

I also raised with you, Mr Speaker, the matter of the lanyards being used, I'm told by Progressive Conservative political staff, which are not the Legislative Assembly issue lanyards, but indeed are lanyards that display and advertise not only the PC logo, but the PC Web site. It's our submission, as New Democrats here, that that sort of partisan utilization of Legislative Assembly property and Legislative Assembly turf is contrary, that partisan propaganda here in the building is contrary to the oft-repeated guidelines issued by you and previous Speakers.

The Speaker: To the member, I received the point of privilege and I had a chance to read it. The member has not made out a prima facie case of contempt. However, I'm pleased to tell him that we have removed the crests he talks about.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Yes, it has been removed. Also, we will be looking at the circumstances surrounding the medalions.

I thank him for bringing the case to me. While it didn't relate to a prima facie contempt in here, it did in fact trouble me very much, so we have copies of what was left of the crest here and they have been removed. I thank the member for his attention.

The member for Timiskaming-Cochrane.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity the government member has allowed me. I am going to address that very issue in a question I'm going to pose to the Premier in question period.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: My colleague did ask for unanimous consent for the member to actually apologize for the comments, not ask a question of the Premier—

The Speaker: No. On a point of order, what I ruled is he can get up on his own to do that, and that's what the ruling is going to be.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent of the House to allow the Premier to apologize for not attending question period for 133 days.

Interjections.

The Speaker: OK, folks, if you want to fool around, I'm going to act very quickly. We're not going to put up with that baloney in here today. I'm going to move very quickly.

The member for Durham on a point of order.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Mr Speaker, I do respect that. I rose yesterday on a point of order addressing the unacceptable parliamentary language from the member from Cochrane—

The Speaker: Member take his seat. I have ruled on that. Any member can come up and correct the record.

I've ruled on that. Very simply, had I heard it, he would have been made to withdraw it. I didn't hear it at the time. The ruling is very clear. The member says he is going to address it, and that's my ruling. That's my ruling. No more point of order from the member for Durham. Take your seat. That's the ruling.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOLF TOURNAMENTS

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):

My question is for the Premier. We on this side of the House believe it is our job to look out for the interests of our working families and to help them with the challenges that are simply too big for them to tackle on their own.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Would the member take his seat. Stop the clock. Minister of Labour, please withdraw that comment. I did hear it. You're close enough that I did hear that one. Please withdraw it.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): I'll withdraw it. He was slandering people, is what I said.

The Speaker: You cannot say that in here. I'm asking you to withdraw it.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I withdraw, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you very much. I again tell you, there will be nobody left in here if we start up with that baloney in here. We're not going to turn this place into a circus.

The leader of the official opposition.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, we believe we should be looking out for the interests of our working families. You clearly believe that you should be looking out for the interests of your friends.

We now know that your friends set up a shell company so they could obtain taxpayers' money. They used that money to set up golf tournaments for profit, and you haven't done a thing about it. In fact, you haven't even said that it's wrong. Premier, why do you continue to look after your friends and ignore the interests of Ontario's hard-working families?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): First of all, let me say that I think it is a sad day in the province of Ontario when entrepreneurs—outstanding, respected business-people from all across northern Ontario who follow all the rules—are subjected to criticism just because they live in northern Ontario or they live in North Bay or they happen to know the local MPP or they happen to know the Premier of the province of Ontario.

Let me just say that the northern Ontario heritage fund, when we took office, used to fund golf courses directly. I can recall a \$140,000 grant for the Haileybury Golf Club and a \$115,000 grant to the New Liskeard Golf Club, both in the riding of the member who took exception yesterday to government money going into

golf. We stopped the funding directly to either non-profit or for-profit golf courses.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, you can characterize this whatever way you want, but what's really important is how Ontario's working families see it. They see it as you, one more time, looking out for the interests of your friends and ignoring their unmet needs. That's how they see it.

Golf is about putting together a foursome and trying to score. That is not what government is all about. Government is about looking out for the needs of Ontario's hard-working families.

1430

Your friends have tricked the people of Ontario out of hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars. They claim they had a non-profit company when that was really just a front for a profit-making scheme. You haven't shut this down, Premier. You haven't even said this was wrong. So I ask you again, why do you look out for your friends and ignore the needs of our hard-working families?

Hon Mr Harris: As I indicated, we stopped the direct grants to businesses or ski hills or golf courses that the former government used to be involved in, and we set up the northern Ontario heritage fund, by people in the north, to set their own criteria, to set their own mandate. Part of that is promotion of tourism. Part of that is promotion of events that will get national or international attention: for example, \$100,000 from the heritage fund for the Scott Tournament of Hearts in Sudbury; for example, just under \$100,000 to promote the first ever Ontario Open championship in Sault Ste Marie.

Now, I didn't hear any complaints from the members of either party when the northern Ontario heritage fund promoted these events for Sault Ste Marie and Sudbury. For some reason or other, when the event moved to North Bay—or now, this year, as it'll be in Thunder Bay, I presume Thunder Bay will be OK; Sudbury will be OK in 2002.

The fact of the matter is that the heritage fund is mandated by people in the north. This project followed all the rules and it has led—

The Speaker: Order. The Premier's time is up. Final supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, nobody here is talking about the Scott Tournament of Hearts. We're talking about your friends. We're talking about a shell corporation. We're talking about using taxpayer dollars for for-profit purposes. That's what we're talking about here.

This is wrong, Premier. It's wrong to continually put the interests of your friends ahead of the needs of our working families, and yet you do it time and time again. When your friends want you to be there for sweetheart land deals or to run roughshod over environmental regulations or when you yourself wanted a 42% pay hike, you were there in a flash. But you're not there, Premier, you're not there for our working families. You're not there for our working families who are sick and tired of the chaos in our schools, who are frightened by the

damage you've caused to their health care and who are angry that you refuse to protect their air and their water.

Once more, Premier, why is it you devote so much of your time and so much of your energy to looking out for the interests of your friends and you continually ignore the needs of our working families?

Hon Mr Harris: I don't know why the Liberal Party is so against northern Ontario, why it's so against northern Ontario being able to broaden its image. I don't know why you think that quality of life is only available in southern Ontario.

Here is a goal in Ontario: to capitalize on the fastest-growing sport that there is, quite frankly, in North America. With all our 800 golf courses, with the hundreds of millions of dollars invested, we're not getting the same advantage that PEI is or Nova Scotia is as a destination. The northern Ontario heritage fund, with very modest amounts of money, far less than you used to give directly to the golf courses and other companies in northern Ontario, decided to promote golf in northern Ontario as an attraction, as a destination, as a tourism attraction, as a promotion. That was their decision and they've made far better investments than you people did with all the money you gave away.

CLASS SIZE

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. The only promotion that's going on in northern Ontario these days, Premier, is the promotion of your friends by you. While you've been playing golf in Florida and while your playing partners have been getting the taxpayers to pick up the tab for their greens fees, we on this side of the House have been working very hard on behalf of Ontario's working families. In fact, we put forward a number of positive ideas to help out our working families.

I'm challenging you today, Premier, to take just one of those ideas and make it happen now. We believe that there should be a real cap on class sizes in the early grades. We believe that there should be no more than 20 students from JK through to grade 3.

Premier, will you do that or will you continue to put the interests of your friends ahead of the interests of our working families?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I'd ask the Minister of Education to respond, Mr Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Stop the clock. The government House leader.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, through you to the honourable member re the question—

The Speaker: I apologize. I had the clock stopped. I thought you were doing a point of order. That was my fault. Go ahead, government House leader.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. If the honourable members across the way would be quiet, I could answer the question.

The Leader of the Opposition has put forward what he calls his plan, but let's be very clear what it is. Let's be very clear. He is talking about watering down the strict high standards in our curriculum. He is talking about not testing students to make sure they can actually learn the new curriculum.

In the legislation his party is opposing, he's talking about taking away the very protections that make sure school boards are meeting class size rules, protecting special education money, protecting classroom money. His party has taken a position against that. That's not the plan for our students in this province.

Mr McGuinty: It's the first time I've seen a golf pro ask the caddy to take a shot for him.

The Speaker: Stop the clock. Government House leader.

Hon Mrs Ecker: With respect, I would like to ask the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw personal comments—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock. Member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale, last warning. You're out of here if you do that again. We're going to pick out people and we're going to throw them out. If you want to carry on like that, you'll all be gone. Toronto Centre-Rosedale, last warning today for you.

Was that answering the question or a point of order?

Hon Mrs Ecker: It's a point of personal privilege, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: You've got the labour minister behind you shouting about being out of order, and so I looked over there. I assumed that's why you're up. Are you answering the question or is this a point of order?

Hon Mrs Ecker: It's a point of personal privilege, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of personal privilege, government House leader.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Mr Speaker, I was just asking the honourable member to withdraw a comment that I found personally offensive.

The Speaker: He did not say as the Minister of Labour did, where he accused somebody of slandering. You know what is parliamentary in here. What he did here was just make a reference.

The leader of the official opposition for the continuation of the question.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, welcome back to the job. Now, do your job and take my question.

We know, Premier, that your friends don't support my plan. They don't want us to take just 10 cents out of every dollar you've committed to tax cuts and they don't want us to invest that in making smaller classes so our children can get better learning and then later on get the best jobs. Why is it that you continue to put the interests of your friends ahead of the needs of our working families?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I would like to ask the honourable member why he is putting the interests of the teacher unions above the interests of kids. His plan is saying,

“Let’s solve all of our problems by decreasing the teacher workload,” by increasing the student workload yet again to decrease the teacher workload. Yes, we need resolutions to challenges. That is not helping our students.

Mr McGuinty: Working families now get it. They understand. They know you’re not looking out for their interests and that you’re very focused on the interests of the well-connected, the wealthy few and your own friends. We know you’re not working on behalf of working families. Everybody now knows you’re not working on behalf of working families. Instead, you’re working on behalf of your special friends.

If that is not true, Premier, if you disagree with any of those statements, then prove it here and now. Put a real cap on class sizes for our children from JK through grade 3, kids between the ages of four and eight years of age. Take just one dime out of every dollar that you want to commit to more tax cuts to benefit your wealthy friends and the well-connected and put that into something that will benefit our working families and make sure our kids get a better job. Will you do that, Premier, or will you continue to go to bat for your wealthy and well-connected friends?

Hon Mrs Ecker: You know, it’s really wonderful. You put these wonderful little things there. You think you just wave a magic wand and they all work. Putting a cap on class size—go out and talk to the people in the sector, because do you know what that will do? First of all, it’s going to cost more money than I’ve seen you ask—you have no idea where you’re going to get the money for this. Secondly, what this will do in high-growth communities is increase the number of portables. In case he hasn’t visited, one of the challenges your government and the previous NDP government left this government was trying to keep up with growth of students in our communities. Because of the billions of dollars we have put into the education system, we are actually seeing for the first time a decrease in portables; we’re seeing our students housed in schools for the first time—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Would the Minister of Education take a seat. Member for Windsor West, this is your last warning too. I was shouting “Order” and you couldn’t even hear me or see me, you were shouting so much. This is your last warning as well.

New question.

1440

COMPETITIVE ELECTRICITY MARKET

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Yesterday the American Vice-President, Dick Cheney, came to town and he told us about the real electrical energy strategy for North America. He was very blunt. He said that they need to build at least one new electrical power plant a week for the next 20 years, a 43% increase in electrical demand. We know there’s no way they’ll be able to do that, so

they’ll have to get the power from somewhere else. Now your government has said that you’re prepared to sell off Ontario’s electrical system.

Premier, it’s pretty clear that if you privatize our system of hydroelectricity in this province, the private companies will be only too happy to buy it up, but they’ll want to sell the power in the United States. Whose side are you on? Are you going to maintain a public system so that Ontario people can benefit, or are you going to privatize it so that the electricity can be sold in the United States? Which is it?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Certainly first and foremost our concern is that we have guaranteed access here in the province of Ontario, not only to affordable but also an adequate supply of electricity. So every initiative we’ve taken has been to ensure that and encourage that now and into the future.

It’s interesting that you mention Mr Cheney, and it’s an interesting debate. The Prime Minister of Canada and I have actually talked about this, because he told me that in his meetings with the President of the United States they felt there were great opportunities for more generation, maybe more nuclear plants, more Candu reactors here in Canada, here in Ontario, and if the federal government was interested, would the provincial government be interested, guaranteeing that obviously we’d look after Canadians’ needs first, in then perhaps building surplus power—jobs and investment here—to be able to sell to the United States. That’s something I think we should look at, and I hope you would support it.

Mr Hampton: Premier, first of all there is no guarantee. When you start selling off those electrical generating stations, they will want to sell the power where they can get the highest price. For you to then come along and say, “We want you to sell it in Ontario”—that’s exactly what California tried to do; it didn’t work once it was privatized and deregulated.

Your energy minister says, “There aren’t the transmission lines.” Mr Cheney was very clear about that: they will build the transmission lines to get our electricity.

They’re already paying 123% more in New York now. The choice will be this: once it’s privatized and the private companies want to sell it in the United States, Ontario consumers, Ontario industry, will either have to pay double and triple the rates for electricity, or we’ll watch our electricity being exported.

Premier, don’t you get it? This is critical for Ontario’s economy. Electricity makes the new economy run. Are you going to sell it out, or are you going to stand for—

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

Hon Mr Harris: What we’re going to do is guarantee and ensure that Ontario interests are put first. We have made it very clear that there will be no—you talk about privatization; not even any market opening until we have those conditions in place that will be beneficial to the people and the industries of Ontario. We have had a lot of debate in this Legislature on that. I think there has

been a consensus. I know you have not agreed, but the Power Workers' Union, for example, does agree that a working marketplace with true competition and adequate supply is the best way to do that. So that's our goal and those are the conditions we've set down. That's what we're working toward here in Ontario.

Mr Hampton: Premier, you keep uttering these words about guarantees for Ontario. There are no guarantees in the legislation. Furthermore, once it's sold to private companies, NAFTA and other trade agreements say that you can't stop that power from going south, that you've opened up the market. That's the reality of this, Premier. For you to utter these things, do you think that corporate energy giants are in the game of charity? Do you think they're going to be willing to sell for a lower price in Ontario when they can get 123% more in New York and when they know the Americans are not interested in conserving, that they're simply interested in getting more electricity, no matter how it comes?

What part of this don't you get? When you open the market, it means they're going to seek the maximum profit, which means the maximum price. There's nothing you can do, once you've sold it off, to protect them. California tried that. It was a disaster. Cancel this now before you sell away what is our most valued commodity in a knowledge economy. Cancel it now.

Hon Mr Harris: I think everybody agrees the key is that you must guarantee and ensure supply. That is the number one condition we set down for any deregulation of the market, and an acceptance that as long as you have that supply, then the marketplace will give you better product, better price over the long term. Our first interest is, of course, for Ontario. California, which you mentioned, had alarmists who screamed and yelled, put their heads in the sand, delayed for eight years, and they had no new construction for an eight-year period. Let's not let that happen in Ontario.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr Hampton: My next question is for the Premier. The Premier needs to understand that the demand for electricity is out of sight in the United States, and that's where the problem is.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Premier, I want to ask you, though, about your experiences on the golf course. We've learned that you've been making taxpayers' money available to your—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The member take his seat. The questions need to relate to the minister's portfolio. As you know, you can't ask—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Take your seat, please. I'm not finished yet. I hope you will get to the point quickly about what the question is.

Mr Hampton: Premier, we exposed your plan to greatly reduce property taxes for privately owned golf courses in Ontario. Today we find out that not only are

you substantially reducing property taxes to artificially low levels, but you're going to do it right away, even before a recommended property tax assessment review is conducted. At the same time, property taxes are going up by 5% for homeowners in Toronto, 9.5% for homeowners in Brampton and 4.5% for homeowners in Richmond Hill. How do you justify giving your corporate friends who own private golf courses a substantial property tax reduction, while you're increasing property taxes for homeowners?

Hon Mr Harris: The first I heard of it was when you raised it yesterday. I'm not aware of any changes that are there. There may be some proposals before the Ministry of Finance. The minister's not here today and I'd be pleased to pass your concerns on to him when he comes back.

Mr Hampton: Premier, read your backbencher Mr Beaubien's report. He is very clear. He says that the lower tax assessment should be put in place and maintained for these golf courses, even though we know their commercial value is very great.

Premier, here's the gist of the problem: you say these properties are to be assessed at market value, but we know from the formulas that they are very valuable properties. So we want to know, how do you justify this? Who asked for it? We reviewed the finance ministry's proposals. There was nobody asking for it there. We looked at who came and talked to Mr Beaubien. No one was asking for it there. Who's asking for this massive property tax reduction for golfing properties? Because we don't see any taxpayers out there who are asking for such a reduction when their homeowner taxes are going up.

The Speaker: The member's time is up.

Hon Mr Harris: I've got a whole whack of briefing notes here but none of them reference that, so perhaps you're the only one.

1450

CABINET OFFICE STAFFING

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. Premier, I want to raise another example where it's very clear that you've looked out for yourself at the expense of Ontario's working families.

In 1995 the cost of running your political Cabinet Office was \$7.8 million, but according to the audited public accounts, last year those costs doubled to \$15.8 million. Can you tell me how it is, at a time when you're asking our working families to accept less health care, less education, less protection for our environment, you have been able to double the cost of running your cabinet?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I appreciate the question. Let me be very clear. In the whole area of my office, the Cabinet Office, political offices, not even taking into account inflation, we have 15% fewer political staff six years after we took office, we have five

fewer ministers and we are budgeting less in this whole area.

It is difficult to compare the Cabinet Office of today and the Cabinet Office of 1995 because of changes that have taken place in the government. Some things that weren't in the Cabinet Office before are in the Cabinet Office today. For example, the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board, which would have been in the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Technology under previous governments, is in the Cabinet Office. The red tape secretariat, which you guys didn't care about, is a new initiative that has saved companies and businesses millions and millions of dollars in time. So when you compare apples to apples, you'll find we compare very favourably.

Mr McGuinty: You're telling me that power really has changed you, Mr Premier. That's what you're telling me. Suddenly now you have two sets of rules, one for working families and another for yourself.

Our hospitals can't afford to hire full-time nurses. Our schools can't afford special education teachers and we can't afford to hire librarians these days. The Ministry of Environment doesn't have enough money to hire back all those water treatment inspectors that you fired. But apparently there is enough money to double the cost of running your cabinet.

To remind viewers, there used to be 130 members sitting in this Legislature. You dropped it to 103. But you have doubled the cost of running your cabinet.

I ask you again, Premier, why is it that you have become suddenly, in government, so adept at looking out for yourself and your friends, but you ignore the needs of our working families?

Hon Mr Harris: As I indicated—the member didn't want to hear the facts, I guess—from the 1990s to 1998, more than \$5 million in annual Cabinet Office staffing and accommodation costs were picked up in other ministries. What I'm telling you is that we consolidated and put the costs where they should be, made it transparent and made it up front. Overall, we have fewer political staff and we're spending less money.

But let me say this: the preamble to your supplementary dealt with working families. You voted against every tax cut for working families, some \$5 billion to \$6 billion in the hands of working families. They are paying 40% less today in income taxes, and you voted against every one of them. Why do you have the nerve to stand up and say you care about working families? You voted to take \$6 billion right out of their pockets.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Clearly, all members of this House are concerned about violence against women and want to see action to address this social problem. The government talks about its commitment to the issue but needs to show what services are being provided and what initiatives have been made a priority. We need to know that there are supports in the

community that will help women escape domestic violence. Minister, what priorities has your ministry committed to?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for children, minister responsible for francophone affairs): This government will not tolerate violence against women and their children. We provide a whole series of supports, both on the justice side and through community supports, to provide support to women fleeing abuse.

In last year's budget we announced \$10 million in new support in this area, which amounted to about a 15% increase in community supports provided by the Ministry of Community and Social Services. We announced \$5 million in funding for an initiative to help provide additional support for transitional supports. I'm pleased to tell the honourable member that one year later, after making that announcement, we have more than 118 transitional support workers providing support to women across the province who have fled abusive partners. So the initiative is well underway and I think providing more support to vulnerable people in our society who need it.

Mrs Munro: I'm glad to see the government is interested in supports for abused women. However, we must remember that often children are the tragic witnesses of domestic violence. Government needs to understand that we need to help the entire family as well as the victims themselves. What supports does the government provide to protect these victims?

Hon Mr Baird: We want to take measures at the community level to provide support to people fleeing abuse. We also want to take some meaningful measures that will address the root causes of these tragedies in a substantial way.

When it comes to children, I think we're all tremendously concerned, whether it's a young boy or a young girl, that they would somehow view that this is acceptable behaviour, that they would somehow learn that this is something that is normal in Ontario, when it's not. It's not normal and it's not accepted. So in last year's budget we provided an additional \$5 million for intervention programs for child victims of domestic violence. One year after making that financial commitment, this funding is supporting 115 groups across Ontario to deliver counselling services to children who witness violence against women. This, in a meaningful way, is hopefully trying to address the root cause of the challenge that is domestic violence.

GOLF TOURNAMENTS

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): I have a question to the Premier. To start, I'd like to say that the personal remarks I made about you yesterday were over the top and I withdraw them. In fact, Premier, I'd like to change my tack totally and I'd like to be your friend, because to be your friend is the only way I could see anybody gets a benefit from the Mike Harris government.

There is evidence that there is a pattern of corruption emerging in your government that benefits your friends. Whether it's your continued promotion of—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Thank you very much. Don't you see me standing up? Am I invisible?

The member will have to withdraw that. You can't say that.

Mr Ramsay: I withdraw that, Mr Speaker, and say there's a pattern of behaviour in this government that seems to benefit the Premier's friends.

Whether it's your continued promotion of the Adams mine garbage deal that Peter Minogue, your best friend, is involved in, or the fast-tracking of Peter Minogue's golf course and subdivision in North Bay, or the funneling of heritage fund dollars through a Peter Minogue shell company for a North Bay for-profit company, the pattern is clear. Why is it that your best friend and other friends of yours are so blessed by your government's largesse?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): The member has mentioned three projects, all in the public domain, all there before public scrutiny, all there meeting all the criteria and all the program. I quite frankly find the question offensive. I think of the hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars, millions of dollars, given in direct grants by the Liberals to golf courses, to ski hills, to individual businesses, and here you have northern Ontario entrepreneurs bringing forward proposals, whether it's for disposal of garbage or to promote non-traditional sources of tourism to bring northern Ontario into the 21st century. I find it disgraceful that any northern member would object to the kind of promotion, the kinds of programs the northern Ontario heritage fund has been involved in, or indeed the Adams mine proposal, which a number of us have talked about for a great deal of time.

Mr Ramsay: Premier, the facts are clear. The northern Ontario heritage fund forbids grants to be awarded to for-profit companies. When a North Bay golf tournament company that you are familiar with ran up against this restriction, they approached Peter Minogue for a way around this hurdle. Again it was a long-time friend of yours and manager of the northern Ontario heritage fund, Royal Poulin, who suggested to Peter Minogue how a non-profit shell company could be established in order to funnel taxpayers' dollars to the for-profit company. Then it was Royal's son, working in the same ministry at the time, who helped facilitate the application for Peter Minogue.

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Premier, if this was all on the up and up, then why wouldn't this scheme be published as a guideline for the heritage fund so that all northerners could understand how to access these funds? Why does it appear again and again that it's just your closest friends who profit from the Mike Harris government?

Hon Mr Harris: I would hardly call the Scott Tournament of Hearts, North Bay, my friends that are involved. Here are the criteria: private-public partnerships, federal

government, other government-related agencies acting together, municipalities, First Nations, local service boards, not-for-profit corporations.

Funding could be provided to market a sporting event which brings national or international media exposure to northern Ontario, such as the Scott Tournament of Hearts did in Sudbury, such as the Winter Games did, such as the first time we ever had the Ontario Open golf classic. Private-public partnerships are the criteria, such as the funding that came forward to host in Sault Ste Marie when I never heard any objections about a tremendously successful promotion and tournament. These projects met all the criteria. They're out there in front for everybody to see.

You may disagree with trying to promote golf in northern Ontario. That's fair criticism. I don't know how you have the courage to do it when you threw millions of dollars directly into golf courses and other recreational facilities—

The Speaker: Order. The Premier's time is up.

DEER DAMAGE

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. As he will know, last year we had quite a bit of snow in our area and the deer had a hard problem finding food. A lot of the deer in the Meaford area have moved out of their traditional area and moved into our apple orchards. I have a report here right from the Ministry of Agriculture that says one apple orchard lost over 80% of their trees. Their trees will be dead now. They won't grow; they won't grow anything else.

The ministry seemed to be able to find \$90 million to help out our oilseed people and that's great—that's to be commended—but here I have apple orchards in my area that are almost wiped out. Will the minister, today, help me compensate those apple growers?

Hon Brian Coburn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I thank the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for the question. My Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and the Ministry of Natural Resources have been working with respect to the deer damage and, as a result of that, the Ministry of Natural Resources has consulted with apple growers who are affected and has offered some solutions and options that would assist growers in minimizing the impact of the deer population.

The deer damage is not compensated under dedicated programs such as livestock predator damage. However, producers who are enrolled in the NISA program—which is the net income stabilization account program—may be eligible for withdrawal for the 2000 stabilization year. In addition, of course, if the situation warrants it, producers are also eligible to apply for interim withdrawal under NISA for the 2001 stabilization year.

Mr Murdoch: That's fine, and most of the apple orchard people belong to NISA, but it won't work this time. Sure, that will compensate them for their livelihood

this year, but, as you mentioned, under the livestock act now, if a wolf came in and killed lambs or killed livestock, they are compensated for that. This is the same thing, only it's nuisance deer that have come in and killed these trees. The people can apply under NISA for this year, but it won't help them buy new trees the same as the livestock act will allow them to buy new lambs or sheep if they're killed by wolves. And in this case, the MNR will not let the landowner protect his trees by shooting them so we have a big problem here that they're unable to control the deer that are killing their trees. And they're killing the trees, not just eating the buds for this year; they're gone forever.

Mr Minister, will you commit today to look at an amendment to the livestock act to include deer in that act? Maybe then we will be able to get some compensation for these farmers.

Hon Mr Coburn: As the member knows, we continue to work with our farmers and our producers for long-term solutions, in fact, made-in-Ontario solutions that are enduring and take the peaks and valleys out of some of these challenges. I encourage the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound to work with his constituents who are facing losses to deer damage and contact my ministry, and we'll work with you to provide some assistance on these specific issues.

To answer your question directly, I will take a look at that. We are looking for long-term solutions. One of the caveats is that compensation on an annual basis is not necessarily a long-term solution, but we will work on that with the member.

NURSES

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Premier. Today, just down the street here, within sight of this building, an amazing event took place. Hospital nurses, front-line nurses, put down their stethoscopes, left their wards and took up picket signs. They held a May Day information picket—mayday, SOS—a warning that hospital nursing is in crisis. In fact, they were wearing buttons that look an awful lot like your highway construction signs, except these say, “Not enough nurses—your tax cuts at work.”

Premier, your government has created a crisis in which nurses are undervalued, underpaid and overworked. In an unprecedented way and for the first time in history, they are voluntarily refusing overtime and extra shifts. It's a job action. They're demanding you take real measures to address the issues, the crisis facing nursing, the issues of working conditions and professional pay and the shortage. What is your response to the working hospital nurses of Ontario?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): The Minister of Health can respond.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I can tell the honourable member that in terms of the instant issues of the day, which is ensuring that patients in Ontario receive the critical care they

require in the hospital environment, I have been communicating with the Ontario Hospital Association and have delivered our expectations that they will take the actions that are necessary to maintain patient care today. Obviously, a series of negotiations is going on between the ONA and the OHA.

I can tell you, in terms of our government, we've been very proactive as a response to the nursing task force report back in 1999, investing \$375 million of taxpayers' money annually to create new nursing positions, and we've also been proactive in a number of other areas involving nurses. We welcome nurses in our province and we want to be there for them.

Ms Lankin: Well, Minister, let me tell you some other expectations you delivered to the OHA and to the public of Ontario. Your finance minister says Ontario cannot compete with Alberta nurses, who recently received a significant wage increase. He went on to say, and I'm quoting, “If our nurses want to move to Alberta, then so be it.” And your Premier said that Ontario's hospital nurses shouldn't be expecting any kind of significant wage increase. This from a government who had a large pay increase for political staff just after the election, who wanted to increase the MPPs' salaries by 42%, who raised wages for doctors, for judges, for government lawyers. What about the nurses, Minister?

Will you tell nurses today that you will not drive any more of them out of the province, that there's a reason for them to stay? Will you tell them that your government will fund hospitals so they can pay nurses professional wages with decent benefits and good working conditions? Will you do that, Minister?

Hon Mr Clement: I will say to anyone who wishes to listen that we as a government have been funding this health care system at an accelerating rate, a 19% increase in the health care system over the last two years. It now represents 44 cents out of every program dollar spent in this province.

With respect to nurses, again, our investment of \$375 million annually to create new nursing positions; \$17 million to create new nursing ER positions; \$10 million to create 106 new nurse practitioner positions. These are the elements of action rather than talk, and I would say to any nurse who is willing to listen, we welcome nurses. We want them to be an integral part of our health care delivery system and we are putting our money where our mouth is, which is what they expect out of leadership from our government.

PREMIER'S ATTENDANCE

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): My question is for the Premier. Last week you managed to make a sit-in look vigorous as you staggered about Ontario with your no-meat, no-juice tour. You waxed hollow about accountability. Today I'd like to give you a chance to actually address a meaningful question about accountability.

I have a private member's bill that establishes a 60% threshold for attendance by the Premier and members of the cabinet in question period. Your lack of commitment to the principle of accountability, as contained in my bill, is a concern. As well, your continued deception around releasing your holiday schedule is at odds with the principles of accountability you like to talk to for everybody else.

Premier, will you commit to the principle of 60% attendance contained in my bill, and will you release your holiday schedule today?

1510

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I was wondering whether you, with all your onerous responsibility in the Legislature, right in your own riding might commit to a little better attendance, it seems to me.

Let me say that my responsibilities are here in the Legislature, with all our ministers. I also have responsibilities in my riding, which is a couple of hundred miles north of the Legislature. I also have responsibilities to all the people of the province.

I can recall that when I sat on the back benches, I can recall that when I was in opposition, it was not nearly as onerous a responsibility or as time-consuming as being a parliamentary assistant, let alone being a minister, let alone being the Premier of the province. My accountability is to you in the Legislature. My accountability is also, though, to the taxpayers, the voters, the citizens, the nurses, the teachers and the child-care workers of this province, and so I make sure that I provide time for them and, quite frankly, they've had a lot better questions for me than you have.

Mr Smitherman: Premier, at the rate you're going it won't be long now before those of us on this side will have the opportunity to fulfil those responsibilities you view as onerous.

Sir, a couple of points on this matter: you spoke about your responsibilities in your riding and yet I note that a story in the North Bay Nugget at the end of the session, 133 days ago, spoke about the lack of attendance you have for your own riding. Sir, you spoke about the quality of the questions you received on the road, but I was there in London when you couldn't hurry fast enough back into the comfort of your GMC Suburban, leaving a constituent asking about the health care of his daughter.

Premier, will you commit today to attend question period on a more regular basis, such as the 60% threshold—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member's time is up. Take his seat. Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: My commitment is to the province of Ontario, to the voters, to the citizens, to all the citizens of Ontario; as I said, to all those who are there. So I certainly commit that I and my ministers will be here and accountable an appropriate amount of time. I also commit to travel the globe to seek out every job, every investment, every opportunity, because ours is a growth agenda. I commit to continue to put the time into the job that the job requires. I visited over 20 communities

before the session started and I took the throne speech to the people of Ontario, but I noticed one little thing: while I was in Sudbury on Friday, we had second and third reading on back-to-work legislation affecting Toronto Centre-Rosedale and you missed both votes.

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question is for the Minister of Correctional Services. On March 24 you released the results of an evaluation done on Project Turnaround, the young offenders' strict discipline facility, which was established in my riding in 1997. There were some very promising results that came out of this evaluation with regard to the rate of young offenders re-offending. Minister, can you share with this House the results and what they mean?

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister of Correctional Services): I'd like to thank the member from Simcoe North for his question. I know he has a very keen and very valid interest in Project Turnaround and the results of that facility, as we as a government do, because we set that project up in 1996 as a pilot project to apply the concept of strict discipline as a correctional model to young offenders. We did that because at the time the recidivism rate, or the rate at which young offenders were going back into society and re-offending after they had left our institutions, was too high: some 60% to 70% to 80%.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Sampson: I say to the member opposite, who stood in this House not too many minutes ago and said we should be proud of the correctional system in this province, that he is proud we are sending 50% to 80% of offenders, from our institutions, back into society to reoffend. I think that's a shameful record to be proud of, I say to the honourable member.

We have a project that has demonstrated tremendous success and we're proud of that.

Mr Dunlop: Thank you for the response, Minister. I'm very proud of my riding of Simcoe North being host to this facility. It's clear from this report that Project Turnaround is changing the lives of young people to create law-abiding, responsible individuals.

In light of these great results from the privately operated Project Turnaround, can you tell us where the ministry will be expanding the strict discipline program, and whether you are also considering expanding on this very successful partnership with the private sector?

Hon Mr Sampson: I thank the honourable member again for the question. I want to continue in the vein of the answer to the first question because I didn't have a chance to answer it as I was interrupted by the people opposite.

What I wanted to say to the members here and to the people watching is that we have a tremendous correctional program in the form of Project Turnaround, where we are able to lower the reoffending rates of young offenders, especially those who are serious and violent offenders, by a third. That's tremendous progress

that we started in 1996, I say to my friends across the floor, that we've monitored since 1996, a program we have modified since 1996 to make sure we get results.

I say to the members opposite, that's how you demonstrate making tough decisions in the right direction in the field of justice and in the field of corrections. You actually do something that demonstrates the result. You don't do what you did, which is sit around and do nothing.

MEDICAL SCHOOL

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): My question is for the Minister of Health. Recently an editorial in the Windsor-Essex media commented on a statement of the Premier and it said, "For many who have been involved in the med school drive"—that is in Windsor-Essex—"the Premier's failure to include Windsor will be seen as a great disappointment. But it wouldn't be unexpected if Windsor is left out in the end."

However, under the headline that read, "Campus coming to Windsor as well, Clement says," you are more positive and are reported to have said, "The Windsor campus likely would be a satellite of the existing medical school at the University of Western Ontario."

In view of your optimistic comments, can the 300,000 residents of the Essex-Windsor area count on your support in establishing a satellite medical school through the University of Western Ontario?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'd be happy to clarify the situation for the honourable member and for this chamber. Certainly we made a very important announcement last Tuesday in which we indicated that we are moving ahead with strategies for physician recruitment and retention which includes a northern medical school.

Just parenthetically, when you have Diane Marleau, the Sudbury MP, saying, "I want us to give credit to Mike Harris and his team for this great decision that was made," that obviously shows bipartisan support, and I know the honourable member was asking the question in the same vein.

With respect to southwestern Ontario, our concern is physician recruitment and retention in urban areas and rural areas. This is not just an urban challenge; it is also a challenge in rural Ontario. Our commitment is to ensure that through our initiative in southwestern Ontario we meet those challenges, and we will do so based on proposals that can now come forward.

Mr Crozier: I appreciate that. It was also reported in the Windsor Star recently that, as you have just said, "The government is exploring a satellite as part of a plan to broaden medical care" for the areas of Essex, Kent and Lambton counties.

It is my understanding as well, and I'm pleased about this, that you have agreed to meet with the medical education task force in June. Really, what I am asking you for is just some good news. I hope you will support the establishment of this medical school in Windsor and

that you will bring good news to us in June. Can I count on that?

Hon Mr Clement: I thank the honourable member for putting his oar in the water on this and I accept his comments in the positive tone in which they were made.

I can tell the honourable and this House that in fact I'm having a series of meetings in May, not June. This is the month of May and they will occur later on.

The member for Windsor-St Clair has been extremely helpful in providing me with some information about his local community. The member for Windsor West has also been helpful, although I'm less clear about her ultimate position, but that's fine.

I can tell you that I'm willing to meet with any groups that have a position on this issue. Certainly, our position is that if there are proposals that can help solve the physician recruitment and retention issue, both in rural areas and in urban areas in southwestern Ontario, those are the kinds of proposals we're interested in.

1520

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Solicitor General. I really did appreciate—and I'm sure the people of Ontario did, as well—hearing about the entire issue around community safety. In my riding of Durham, residents have been involved for years in establishing a variety of initiatives designed to improve community safety. Such programs as Neighbourhood Watch and road safety programs are just a couple, and they've been coordinated by volunteer citizens like Marianne Winters in Orono, Masood Vatandoust, Nicole Johnson, Lloyd and Susan Johnson of Newcastle and Marianne Yeatman of Bowmanville, just to name a few. They've tried to maintain a sense of community safety.

Minister, would you please tell the House today, and the people, about the Partners Against Crime program and the appropriate grants that will assist communities like mine across this province?

Hon David Turnbull (Solicitor General): The Partners Against Crime program was designed to stimulate the police and community to develop and deliver crime prevention programs and community safety initiatives. Since 1997, 208 communities across Ontario, and community agencies and police services, have received funding of some \$7 million under this program.

There are three components of this program. First is community crime prevention, which allows those closest to community concerns to set local priorities and develop and implement local solutions. Then there is front-line policing crime prevention, which reinvests proceeds of crime money into front-line policing activities. Also, we have law enforcement grants.

Mr O'Toole: It's really exciting to hear that 208 communities have already picked up on this government initiative. It's clear evidence that we're certainly keeping our promise of getting tough on crime. I think you as minister serve as a good sentinel for that.

I know the Durham constituents, and indeed all of Ontario, are thirsty to know more about the plan. Can you outline for us today the kinds of community programs that are being funded by you and this government in programs like Partners Against Crime?

Hon Mr Turnbull: In fact, you've already mentioned two of them. There's Crime Stoppers and Neighbourhood Watch. In addition to these, there are programs aimed at providing occupational, vocational and academic opportunities for young offenders. There are recreational activities for youth, mentoring programs between police officers and at-risk youth, as well as implementing justice councils. We also have public education and awareness programs under this.

Under front-line policing grants, we provide money to municipal police services and to the OPP for things such as the purchase of stop sticks and spike belts to reduce the duration of police pursuits and to improve safety for police and the public. Also, this has allowed the purchase of laser speed guns and sophisticated breathalyzer equipment to enhance road safety enforcement and drinking-and-driving initiatives.

RAIL SERVICE

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): My question is to the Premier. Less than two weeks ago, hundreds of northern residents boarded the Survival Express, bound for Toronto. These were people from my community, the community of the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane and, Premier, people from your community of North Bay. All these hundreds of people had one message, and it was loud and clear: don't kill our communities, don't kill our trains. Premier, it's time you listened to the people of the north. Will you do that?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Yes.

Mr Bisson: Can I take that to say you will stand with the people who came down on the Survival Express and you will reinstate and make sure the monies necessary to the ONTC are there, that the ONTC stays under public control and that rail passenger service in fact stays under public control and keeps rolling in northern Ontario?

Hon Mr Harris: I was asked, will I listen to the people of the north? That's what I've been doing for 20 years, as an MPP, as a cabinet minister, as somebody in opposition, as leader of a party in opposition and as Premier of the province. When it comes to the ONTC, we made a very firm commitment: we were not getting good service, and we needed to take a good, sound look at the ONTC to see if we could not improve overall service—freight, passenger service, bus service and telecommunications. We would take a look and examine all proposals to do that. That was the recommendation of the consultants who were hired. That was adopted unanimously by the board of directors, all from northern Ontario, and accepted by the government. The minister, the ministry and the board are now empowered to talk to all those interested, including the mayors and reeves,

those who came to Queen's Park and those in the private sector, to see what we can do—

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

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): For the first time since December 20, 2000, I have a chance to ask a question of the Premier—some 133 days since I've had that opportunity.

I want to ask him this question: in the Niagara Peninsula he may be aware, as his own members and other members would be, that there is a tremendous shortage of ophthalmologists, so that people who are seeking eye care in the Niagara region are either forced to go to Hamilton, where they're already backed up with a long list for that service, or they have to wait an inordinately long period of time to receive eye care.

In other parts of the province where there isn't a sufficient number of ophthalmologists, the Minister of Health has permitted a temporary lifting of the billing cap. Until such time as we have a sufficient number in the Niagara region, will you now, today, treat the people of the Niagara region the way others have been treated in the province and lift that billing cap on an interim basis so that people in the Niagara region may receive adequate eye care?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I appreciate the member's concern, and I will be pleased to pass that concern on to the minister.

Mr Bradley: My supplementary question to the Premier also revolves around the need for medical care in the Niagara region. The Premier would be aware that in many parts of the province, again including St Catharines and the Niagara Peninsula, there happens to be a real shortage of family physicians. We also have that in the field of those who deal with skin problems that people have—dermatologists, that is—but we have a dearth of family physicians in the Niagara region. People are calling the constituency offices of the members there to try to obtain the services of a physician, and we find instead that we're having people who are retiring, people who are passing on and people who are moving. Therefore we have a genuine crisis in the field of medical care because people do not have the services of a family physician.

The Premier would know that his government has an opportunity to take action which would overcome this problem in the Niagara region—in particular in the city of St Catharines, where I'm getting the calls, but throughout the Niagara region. I ask the Premier in the House today, will he undertake to provide programs which would in the very near future bring to the Niagara Peninsula, to the city of St Catharines, family physicians who can then serve the people in our area?

Hon Mr Harris: I think the minister can respond to that.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I thank the member for his concern about this particular issue. Indeed, as part of our overall strategy on physician recruitment and retention to respond to the McKendry report as well as other things, we have put provincial resources into rural premiums for GPs who are on call, we have a specific rural recruitment and retention program for underserved areas that have that designation, we are enhancing on-call coverage, we are trying to get specialist hospital on-call coverage improved as well, we have an incentive funding program for rural students who take a clerkship rotation. These are all things we have done to date. Is there more to do? Yes, there is, and that is why we made our announcements last week. But if the honourable member has any particular issues, certainly I'd be happy to take them under advisement.

1530

PETITIONS

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas the Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario plans to build a new high school in Cornwall to provide accommodations for 300 students at the taxpayers' cost of over \$9 million;

"Whereas the Upper Canada District School Board currently has 700 excess pupil spaces in the high school level in Cornwall and is looking at filling these spaces with grade 7 and 8 students, necessitating an elementary school closure;

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

"Please urge these coterminous boards to share the facilities that exist. Due to a previous collaboration effort, these boards presently share space in one high school. This has been a harmonious, cost-effective union. We request that the government of Ontario urge the continuation of co-operation of these boards to avoid unnecessary spending of tax dollars. Without this co-operation, we face sending our young children into high schools at an early age simply to fill space, while a coterminous board spends upwards of \$9 million to build yet another facility."

This petition is signed by Terri Forrester, Shirley Ferguson and 1,600 of my other constituents, and I affix my signature to this petition.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas the community of Sarnia is witnessing many women developing mesothelioma and asbestosis as

a result of the asbestos brought home on their husbands' work clothing; and

"Whereas similar cases are occurring in other areas of the province;

"We, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act to allow compensation for family members who develop occupational illness as a result of workplace toxins inadvertently brought home."

I add my name to those of the petitioners.

PROTECTION OF MINORS

Mr Bob Wood (London West): I have a petition signed by 112 people:

"Whereas children are being exposed to sexually explicit materials in many commercial establishments;

"Whereas many municipalities do not have bylaws in place to protect minors and those that do vary from place to place and have failed to protect minors from unwanted exposure to sexually explicit materials;

"Whereas uniform standards are needed in Ontario that would make it illegal to sell, rent, loan or display sexually explicit materials to minors;

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

"To pass Bill 95, Protection of Minors from Sexually Explicit Goods and Services Act, 2000, as soon as possible."

WHITE BIRCH PLANT

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): I'd like to acknowledge the presence of 30 of my constituents, who have come from Temagami to hear the reading of this petition. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources has chosen to deny a recent bid to have a value-added white birch plant in Temagami;

"Whereas the province of Ontario is systematically stripping away the economic backbone of Temagami through policy and practices that resulted in the closures of the Milnes and Son mill and the MNR district office and now the outright rejection of a viable business opportunity;

"Now, therefore, on behalf of the residents of Temagami, and in particular the approximately 50 families which have put their lives on hold while their breadwinners travel out of town to find gainful employment, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to provide a wood directive in order to enable Temagami to have a value-added white birch plant in Temagami, thus creating enough jobs to allow this town to survive."

I will add my signature to this petition.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I've got quite a number of petitions from many concerned citizens.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the report of the McKendry commission, released by the Ontario Ministry of Health in December 1999, finds that Ontario is facing a shortage of over 1,000 physicians; and

"Whereas at least 286 international medical graduates in Ontario have successfully completed the Medical Council of Canada evaluating exam, demonstrating competence in clinical knowledge; and

"Whereas the number of Ministry of Health funded post-graduate positions in 'pool B' (that is, international medical graduates) has been reduced from 289 to 81 since 1994; and

"Whereas the Council of Ontario Faculties of Medicine has indicated that they have the capacity to absorb an increase in the number of entry-level post-graduate positions, as long as sufficient resources are provided to support the increase; and

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario unanimously passed private member's resolution 6 on November 25, 1999, which held that the government of Ontario should implement a plan to improve access to professions and trades for foreign-trained professionals.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care as follows:

"(a) to restore the number of Ministry of Health funded post-graduate positions for international medical graduates to at least 1994 levels;

"(b) to increase immediately the number of entry-level post-graduate training positions to the full capacity of the Ontario faculties of medicine;

"(c) to make the increased entry-level post-graduate positions directly available to international medical graduates who have successfully completed the requisite examinations;

"(d) to develop a plan to identify alternative funding mechanisms that allow more equitable access for international physicians to the health care system in Ontario; and

"(e) to appoint a committee, with representation from the international medical graduate community, to review and dismantle the barriers which have been established to prevent international physicians from gaining fair access to licensure and practice in Ontario."

I support this petition.

PAPER SLUDGE

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents of the riding of Durham have voiced their objection to the storage of paper sludge and related material within the Oak Ridges moraine; and

"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; and

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

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment is currently completing a study of the impact of paper sludge in the riding of Durham:

"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. And that such re-evaluation of this process include consultation with residents in communities where paper sludge is spread, stored and 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 support and sign this on their behalf.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): "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 pleased to add my signature to this petition.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I continue to receive petitions from the CAW. These were forwarded to me by Cathy Walker, who is the national health and safety director. The petitions read 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."

I continue to add my support by adding my name to this petition.

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HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I'm pleased to present this petition. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, expressing concern over health care and possible reduction of any hospital services. It winds up with:

"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."

PROBATION AND PAROLE OFFICERS

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario have long-standing grievances from many probation and parole officers with respect to reclassification and salaries and the refusal to recognize the significant role probation and parole officers play in the public safety of Ontario,

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

"We call upon the government of Ontario to have our job reclassified, to reflect the changes in our job over the past number of years. Along with that, we are seeking a significant salary increase, one which mirrors our counterparts within the justice system; namely, judges and crown attorneys."

I affix my name to this petition.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I have a further petition forwarded to me by Dexter Williams of Mississauga. The petition reads as follows:

"Whereas the proposed 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;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, 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, and;

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

I am pleased to add my name to that of Mr Williams and the other petitioners.

HORSE RIDING SAFETY

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): 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.”

I affix my name to this petition.

SOCIAL AUDIT

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): I am pleased to announce to the Legislature that we are launching a petition campaign to try to persuade the province to perform a social audit on the Ontario Works system. We've seen how the social service programs in this province have been absolutely changed over the last six years, and we think a social audit is the only responsible thing for the government to do.

I'm pleased to read my petition, which will be coming from across the province.

“Whereas the Mike Harris—

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): We'll allow you to either explain it or read it, but not both.

Mr Gravelle: I apologize.

“Whereas the Mike Harris government has undertaken a massive reform of the way social service programs are managed and delivered in this province; and

“Whereas the government's language, actions and policies over the last six years have reinforced the worst kind of stereotypes about people on social assistance without offering Ontarians any proof that the policies they've put in place are meeting the needs of those whose circumstances have forced them to seek temporary assistance from Ontario's social safety net; and

“Whereas this government when challenged on how well their Ontario Works programs are working, points to welfare caseload numbers as their one and only measurement of success or failure; and

“Whereas a social audit would determine how this government's policies are impacting on low-income children and families and allow for enhancements to improve the well-being, employability and economic security of individuals and families in need;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that the government of Ontario conduct a social audit of its Ontario Works program.”

Much support across the province, and I'm pleased to add my name to this petition.

The Acting Speaker: The time for petitions is ended.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member for Waterloo-Wellington earlier today rose on a point of order and asked for the unanimous consent of this House to allow a member opposite to do something. I noted that unanimous consent was refused. I just ask that the Speaker investigate and determine whether or not the point of order was in fact in order. I believe it was in order to ask

for unanimous consent. It was never put. If we could get a report, I'd appreciate it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): That is a point of order and I will consult with the Speaker and see if there is something that should be done about it.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): On the same point of order, Mr Speaker, which was not explained by the minister of public works—

The Acting Speaker: I'm sorry. It's not my habit to allow debate on a point of order. I take the point of order and I rule on it and that's it.

Mr Sergio: No, I'm talking to my own point of order.

The Acting Speaker: If you have a point of order on your own, then I'd be pleased to hear it.

Mr Sergio: My point of order is this, Mr Speaker: that the Speaker of the House who listened to that point of order has already decided on it.

The Acting Speaker: If that's so, then that's great.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): On a point of order, Speaker: I think there is an opportunity to simply have the caucus respond to what was asked. I would—

The Acting Speaker: No, I'm sorry. I don't entertain debate on points of order. If somebody makes a point of order, I rule on it or prevaricate and find out about it, but I do not take debate on it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 30, 2001, on the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the speech of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): I will be sharing my time with the member for Niagara Falls.

It's a privilege to rise today and speak on the throne speech. It is clear that our government has a plan to address the unique challenges Ontario will face in the next century. We expect the Liberals or New Democrats to come up with solutions to the 19th century problems, or on a creative day, 20th century problems. Only the Mike Harris government has the courage, vision and leadership to look ahead. The 21 Steps Into the 21st Century are just that: looking ahead.

I'm going to focus on just a few of the 21 steps, in the interest of time.

Step 1 is removing barriers to jobs, investment and growth. Plans expressed in the throne speech are good for business and the residents in Thornhill. Simply, Ontario thrives when taxes are low. Ontarians have money for expansion of their businesses. They have money to hire more workers and create employment. They have money to build homes, many of which are being built in Thornhill. This creates further employment.

I had the privilege of meeting Scott Cole, who is a professional engineer, managing director and CEO of Cole Sherman and Associates in Thornhill, in a most recent police appreciation in York region. We talked about the throne speech and the direction of this government. He said to me, "With the reduction in the tax rate, there is more money for companies to invest in upgrading computer equipment and provide employee training. We have put our tax savings back into our key resource: people. Training of employees, such as engineers and architects, has allowed our services to be delivered in a timely fashion, which is key to our industry." This is but one of many Thornhill residents who believe this government is on the right track with tax cuts.

Want more proof? Look around Thornhill. Thornhill is made up of two municipalities: Vaughan and Markham. There are new homes going up in block 10, which is on the Vaughan side; at Highway 7 and Leslie in Markham, more homes going up. On this side of the House we know that a strong economy and a high quality of life are not mutually exclusive. We know that a high quality of life is provided by a strong economy.

1550

Step 2, paying down the debt: previous governments borrowed from the future when spending in the present. Deficit financing, of course, is not sustainable. You can only spend more than you take in for so long, until it starts to catch up with you. Our government recognizes that it's time to start paying down the mortgage on our future so that my children, our children, who are the future generation, will be debt-free. Our government has a plan on debt reduction and we will stick to this plan. Paying down our debt that Ontario has accumulated over decades is the right thing to do. Even federal Liberal Finance Minister Paul Martin agrees with us. But why don't the Ontario Liberals? Perhaps unions haven't yet given Dalton McGuinty permission.

Step 3 is smaller government. Government is not an end unto itself; government exists to serve Ontarians. As citizens, we tend to accept a certain role for governments, government agencies and crown corporations, because that's how it has always been. Why should Ontario be governed as it has always been? It is our responsibility to see how we can improve the lives of Ontarians and see how we can improve the way government serves Ontarians. The status quo, while it is an option, is not the only option. That's the kind of failed thinking that led to inefficient services, larger and larger government and continuous deficits.

Step 10 is choice in education. In York region we are fortunate to have excellent elementary and secondary schools. In most cases there is a choice of the schools they want to go to. But it's not the same in all of Ontario. Our plan to allow more choice in education will even the playing field for all Ontario students and their families.

Step 11, high education standards and performance-based accountability: parents and students should expect a clear assessment of students' progress. Passing should not be an automatic reward for being registered in class

or even showing up. I recall years ago that parents would come to me when I was a trustee with the York Catholic board and ask that their child repeat the grade because they didn't feel they had reached the level to move forward. They asked the teacher, they asked the principal and they asked the school board, and the answer was always, "No, because the students are moving along with their peers." We will, and should, continue to set standards for excellence in schools because parents demand it and students deserve it. While being required to repeat a grade may not help student morale in the short run, being unable to read or count is far worse for their morale in the long run.

Step 13, post-secondary access: our government has long made clear commitments to post-secondary education. Every willing and qualified student will have a place in a post-secondary system. Through SuperBuild investments, we have created tens of thousands of spaces for students who wish to enrol in post-secondary education, recognizing the value of this education and the demand that employers place on it.

What does the opposition think? Let us quote Dalton McGuinty, on a visit to Kingston almost two months ago: "You work hard, you get decent marks, you get to pursue post-secondary studies." This was in the Queen's University Journal, March 9, 2001. Is that the Liberal plan: mediocrity for all?

Instead of settling for decent marks, our government is taking a radical approach: fostering excellence in public schools and in students. The new rigorous curriculum promotes excellence and promotes students in their curriculum so they'll be able to find jobs in the future, will be able to enter this post-secondary education.

Step 14, ensuring a skilled workforce: last summer I had the opportunity to visit a company, RWD tool and die; the CEO is Pino Furfaro. He demonstrated the need of Ontario's businesses for skilled workers in trades. By establishing a post-secondary institution linking education and training to market needs, our government shows that we are listening to people like Pino Furfaro in Ontario.

Step 15 is leadership in health care reform. We have demonstrated our commitment to quality, accessible health care. Who is talking about moving away from the publicly funded health care system and scaremongering? It's the opposition. What are they afraid of? The opportunity to better provide this essential service for Ontarians? Our duty of responsibility to taxpayers and patients? Making the tough decisions necessary to ensure that health care in Canada and Ontario is sustainable?

Telehealth is the kind of innovation that will better serve the needs of Ontarians, at lower cost to all taxpayers. Registered nurses answer health questions 24 hours a day, seven days a week, giving advice on illness, injury and lifestyle questions.

Step 17 is protecting environmental health and safety. Our government has, through initiatives such as Ontario's Living Legacy, demonstrated our commitment to a safe, clean and healthy province.

Last Saturday the Thornhill Community Environment Day, which I attended, was organized by a group called Friends of Little German Mills Creek. Karen Abrahams organized this group and is their leader, along with the area Scout groups. It was a pleasure attending this event. This was supported by organizations such as the town of Markham, St Robert Catholic High School, the Girl Guides of Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. Also in attendance were some local councillors—Stan Daurio and Erin Shapero—and our own regional chair, Bill Fisch.

Our government has shown its commitment to this type of project and we encourage other events like this: tree and shrub planting, environmental education, and community garbage cleanup. The community of Thornhill is very committed to the environment and I am pleased that the Ministry of Natural Resources is also committed to the partnership that we have in Thornhill.

The Mike Harris government is ready and willing to accept the challenges of the future. The 21 steps into the 21st century progressively move us into the future. I am quite pleased to be here to speak on this bill and to support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Further debate?

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): It's a pleasure to rise and join in the debate on the throne speech and follow the member from Thornhill. I congratulate her on her opening 10 minutes.

Let me first of all apologize to anyone at home offended by the fact that my jacket is on the chair behind me. It's very hot in here. It's difficult to have it on the entire time I'm in here, so I'm going to leave it off because it's stifling in here.

I want to congratulate the member from Thornhill on her speech. She mentioned in her speech that she was a trustee of a Catholic school board before she came to the Legislature in 1999. Back then, and even today, the government relied quite heavily on her for her advice with a lot of the changes in the education field. I know we talked to the member from Thornhill prior to 1999 about some of the changes, for instance, in the funding formula for education.

When Catholic education was at a disadvantage with the public education system in the way it was funded, the government brought in a new funding formula, and one of the principal beneficiaries of that new funding formula that the member from Thornhill helped us with prior to 1999 was indeed Catholic boards, because it put funding on a fairer footing across Ontario. I know if you talk to Catholic boards all across the province, they realize that. In fact, my Catholic board in Niagara has continued to have increases in funding, over and above those small increments in enrolment growth that they've had. So I congratulate the member for her speech and for her role in the government, now and prior to her election in 1999.

One of the topics the member touched upon in her remarks was the importance of a strong economy. Of course, we've always known that, and that's what we

talked about in 1995, that without a strong economy you wouldn't get the revenues that are needed to invest in health care and education.

1600

One of the principal problems with the Ontario economy, especially between 1990 and 1995, was the extremely heavy burden of taxation we had on our citizens. The previous two governments, from 1985 to 1990 and 1990 to 1995, had dramatically increased taxes, especially on the working families of Ontario. What we saw, especially 1990 to 1995, was that even after the American economy had a downturn in 1990-91, they started back on the road to growth shortly thereafter in 1992. In fact, when you hear economic commentators talk about the economy, they talk about the fact that the US has had economic growth since 1992. They had 10 years of uninterrupted strong economic growth. This year that's been tempered a little bit, but it's already starting to come back, as we see.

But Ontario did not experience the bounce back in the economy anywhere nearly as quickly as the Americans did. The biggest reason for that, quite frankly, was that the consumer spending portion of the economy makes up over 60% of our economy, and consumer spending stayed dormant for most of the early 1990s. The reason was because the high levels of taxation that were put on the people of Ontario made it impossible for them to make investments in new vehicles, in their homes, in new homes, washers and dryers and a variety of other things. This government knew that. It knew the frustration Ontario citizens had. I remember working as a student at General Motors, and every time a paycheque came around how frustrated the workers were when they looked at their gross amount and then their net amount, because the amount of taxes that came off was so high and so frustrating. So this government began to reduce taxes in 1995 and has continued to do so ever since. There is a variety of other taxes we also reduced, like the employer health tax and others.

Now, fast-forward into the year 2000-01 and look at the economy. What is the strength of the economy? What has been the underpinning of our economy? What has kept us from spiralling into recession? We've had an economic slowdown similar to that of the United States. We had growth last year and the year before of 5% and 4.5%—very high growth. Our growth this year looks like it'll be about 2.5%. What is it that's been keeping our economy that buoyant, more buoyant than many economies around the world? It is—and every statistic and every economist says this, and every time you pick up a newspaper it reads this—consumer spending.

Now, the federal Liberals have twigged to this and realize they also have to do something on their end—they've been in surplus for a couple of years. They're still taking a lot more out of employment insurance premiums than they need to. They've started to lower those, though. They've also committed to reducing taxation, especially income tax. Why income tax? We know that economists will all tell you that the one tax

that causes more spending in the economy, the one that will help create the most economic growth, is income tax. That is why this government, and now the federal Liberals, are moving on income tax reduction.

So I think the future bodes well. We've had a great five years of economic growth. We've had a bit of a slowdown in 2000-01. That's going to pick up in the second half of this year and continue strong economic growth in the future years. All of that—the vast majority of that—is due to the income tax cuts this government brought in, and I am delighted that we're going to continue with those. That was mentioned in the throne speech.

Also, I might note that with every reduction in income tax we made in Ontario, and other taxes, our revenues went up. That point is often lost on a lot of people. Every time we cut taxes, our revenues grew. Conversely, when governments previous to ours came in and increased income tax rates, their revenues often went down. So you see that we've cut taxes and revenues have gone up, and that has allowed us to do a lot of things; for instance, increase health care spending from about \$17.5 billion to about \$22.5 billion over the last five years. That's substantial.

At some point in time we've got to get some kind of lid on this. I think the Premier alluded to that, and the throne speech has alluded to that. I meet all the time with people at my hospital, and the hospitals will want more money. I know the nurses all want more money and more staff. I know that doctors all want exemptions from their caps. The member for St Catharines got up today and talked about exemptions for ophthalmologists and dermatologists. I have that pressure in my riding, also. We have pressures for more doctors.

Long-term care homes: they all want more funding so they can have more staff and if there is a large ONA agreement, then that's an increase in funding. Community care access centres: in my own area we've seen increased 100% in three years, the budget for the community care access centre; that's for home care.

Mr Rock doesn't quite realize that we've actually moved down this road. He always talks about the need to move toward home care; we've already done that in this province and so have the other provinces. He's a little bit out of touch with that direction we've been moving in.

We've had dramatic increases, but still they want more. I know more and more drugs continue to come on, and the usage of drugs continues to go up. I'm only touching on a few of the pressures in that health care system, and they are immense.

We need to continue to move this economy forward, and I think continued attention to making our economy the most competitive place in the world to locate a business, to make investments, is vital if we're going to continue to be able to have the revenue generation in order to pay for health care investments and the like.

I was particularly delighted, I want to say, to see in the throne speech that my 1997—I believe—private member's bill about expanding the reach of the Provincial

Auditor in the Audit Act so that he could do value-for-money audits of hospitals, colleges, universities and other agencies who receive money from the provincial government was embraced. I did get all-party approval for my bill—I think it was in 1996, perhaps in 1997—for which I thank all the members of the House.

At the time, I remember Minister Eves, in a subsequent budget, promised some sort of alternative to that and to make value-for-money audits the rule of the day in all those institutions. They did start to draft a bill, but that was never really completely followed through with. Instead the government has seen fit to revert back to expanding the Audit Act, as my bill had called for back in 1996, and I'm pleased to see that.

I note, and if anyone cares to go back and look at the debate we had then, you will see that a lot of universities and even hospitals hired lawyers to try to keep the Provincial Auditor out of their institutions, which said to me at the time, and still says to me today, why would they go to that great length to spend public money to keep the Provincial Auditor from looking at their books? It was reprehensible, and I think the government's embracing of that initiative that I put forward in 1996 or 1997—and I believe the member from Kingston and the Islands has also put forward a bill more recently. He's the Chair of the public accounts committee, which I have the pleasure of sitting on with him. He put forward a similar bill, so I know the members opposite will endorse that position in the throne speech. Thank you.

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain):

There was nothing in the throne speech that eased the insecurities of my constituents when it came to health care, when it came to education and when it came to energy, and I will be talking about education later on in the cycle.

I want to talk about my constituents, John and Margo Bergez, who talk about the increase in their energy costs. They wrote a letter to Mr Harris, and I'll just read a couple of the paragraphs:

“Dear Mr Harris,

“I am writing regarding your plan to deregulate Ontario Hydro.... So far this year I have spent almost what it used to cost for one year!

“Experience in both England and the United States has shown that deregulation invariably results in a reduction of services and increase in prices. This is the result of corporations wanting to maximize their profits. There is nothing wrong with making a profit. But it should not be a case of gouging the public....

“Public utilities belong to the people and before any selling is done they should have a chance to say if this is what they want. Can we be absolutely certain that something similar to what is happening in California will not happen here....

“At present in the United States, Exxon is reporting a first quarter profit of \$5 billion, yet the price of gasoline continues to rise. Can one absolutely be sure that the same will not happen if Hydro is deregulated?

“The way things are going now I am sitting here wondering how much longer my wife and I will be able to live in our house as the costs continue to rocket upwards. We invested everything in this home and losing it would be devastating, more so since we are now retired. This is not a cloud that should be hanging over our heads.

“Please don’t do this to us.

“Yours truly....”

It’s signed by Mr and Mrs Bergez.

There was nothing in the throne speech that eased these constituents’ fears. There was nothing in the throne speech that eased the fears of the constituents whose tuition fees are rising. I noticed the member opposite from Thornhill mentioned fearmongering. It’s not fearmongering. These letters are from constituents who are afraid, who are scared. It’s nothing we’re saying; it’s everything you’re doing and everything you’re not doing to help the residents of this province.

1610

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I want to comment on the remarks of the member from Niagara Falls and, if time permits, Thornhill. I thought it was interesting that the member from Niagara Falls has now definitively told everyone who was wondering when the turnaround was going to come that it’s definitely going to happen in the second half. I was quite shocked to hear that, because everybody’s searching. First of all it was supposed to be just a first-quarter dip, then it was going to be the second-quarter dip, and now the real debate—and they’re 50-50 on it at this point—is whether or not there will be a full-blown recession, and will we get the recovery in the first quarter of 2002? Yet we’ve got a government backbencher who must have inside information about what’s going to happen in the economy because he’s just all fired up that it’s definitely going to turn around in the second half, meaning of course the third and fourth quarters. It’ll be interesting to watch that take place.

I raise that because it has to raise questions about the rest of his economic analysis. The member talked about the fact that everything can be put to consumer spending. To a large part he’s correct, except a lot of that consumer spending demand that has been giving us the stimuli in Ontario has been coming from the United States. It’s the American demand in large part for new automobiles, which of course is the industry that is the engine of our economy, certainly in Ontario and to a large degree in all of Canada, that gives us the buoyancy. What on earth would tax cuts in Ontario have to do with somebody who lives in Wisconsin deciding whether or not they’re going to buy a new car?

The fact of the matter is that they couldn’t have screwed up this economy if they’d tried, the demand coming out of the United States was so great. So let’s keep in mind as the economy goes into the ditch that they want to take credit when it’s booming; they’re going to take responsibility when it’s over.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): It is a pleasure to take part in the debate this afternoon, where the member from Niagara Falls spoke eloquently, and the member from Thornhill. Members opposite always talk about doom and gloom and how our economy is tied to the US economy and our economy only grows because of the US. They fail to understand and acknowledge that Ontario’s economy grew much more than the US economy. In fact, we grew more than all the G7 countries.

One of these 21 steps for the 21st century—we have three challenges and three priorities that we are going to be carrying forward: growth, fiscal responsibility and accountability. If we talk about growth, that growth being Smart Growth, we do believe in growth but we have to make sure that we look after the environment at the same time. We want to be protecting the moraine and, at the same time, jobs. We want to make sure that there is job growth. In the past six years, because of our tax cuts, we have been able to create more than 822,000 net new jobs. More than 576,000 people have been able to come home and say, “Family, I got the job.”

Those are the people who are now working very hard, paying the tax dollars. A lot of times the debate goes on: “How do tax cuts create jobs?” Because they fuel the economy. The money that goes back into the people’s pockets fuels the economy and thus more people are working. It’s very simple. It’s very simple arithmetic. More people are working and paying more money, and the government has more money to spend on much-needed programs like health care, which I’m sure we’ll be talking about this afternoon.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I’d like to comment with respect to something the member from Thornhill said earlier. She said that in effect the government shouldn’t be borrowing money. This government did even worse than that. When we were still running an annual deficit over the last five years, it borrowed up to \$10 billion in order to pay for the tax cut.

I suppose the fundamental difference between their approach and the approach of the federal government has been the fact that the federal government, through Mr Martin, said categorically, “We are not going to have tax cuts while we’re still running an annual deficit.” So if she now bemoans the fact that we have a debt in Ontario of \$115 billion, when it was \$85 billion when they took over in 1995, let us just remind the people of the province that \$10 billion of that was caused by premature tax cuts when we were still running a deficit on an annual basis.

Coming to the member from Niagara Falls and dealing with the amendments to the Audit Act, I totally agree with him. He brought a bill forward in 1996, which I substantially brought forward again in December of last year, which I again introduced on the first day of the session just last week, in which we’re basically asking the Provincial Auditor to have the authority to follow the money that’s being transferred to our transfer agencies: universities, hospitals, school boards, municipalities.

Sixty per cent of the money that the province of Ontario spends, it spends through those transfer agencies, which the Provincial Auditor cannot have any audit control over at all.

We want that power, and I invite him. He didn't get anywhere in 1996, even though it was included in the throne speech at that time and in the budget speech of Mr Eves of that time. I found it very interesting that there was absolutely nothing mentioned by any of the ministers yesterday. I therefore ask at this point in time—

The Acting Speaker: Time has expired.

Mr Gerretsen: As my time is over, I move unanimous consent to give second and third reading to Bill 5, my private member's bill.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Niagara Falls has two minutes to respond.

Mr Maves: Thank you to the members opposite, the member for Hamilton-Mountain, the member for Hamilton West, the member for Kingston and the Islands and the member with the longest title here, Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, for responding to my comments.

Firstly, it's not just me standing up and prognosticating about the economy. Any time you pick up a paper or read news articles off Web sites, you'll see a lot of columnists and economic people talking about how important consumer spending has been to this economy in the last little while.

Here's one. The member opposite accused me of being ahead of everybody. I just happened to look at Mr Martiniuk's paper, the member for Cambridge. The first article says, "The Canadian economy, like its US counterpart, continues to defy the pessimists," like the members opposite, "said David Rosenberg, chief economist at Merrill Lynch Canada. 'Although the economy is not strong, it is not headed for a recession. The full impact of the interest rate and tax cuts ushered in this year have yet to be felt.'" So there are quite a few people saying the same thing. While I appreciate the flattering comments that the member thinks I would come out ahead of everybody else in my predictions, no, some of my comments are guided by other economists and things that they're saying, things that I'm reading.

To the member for Hamilton Mountain, I think what you should think about responding with to the person who wrote you about higher hydro rates is that while the NDP, for the first three years in office, increased hydro rates by about 35%, they did freeze them in 1993. There's been a freeze on hydro rates for eight years in the province of Ontario. Your party was against those freezes and I think that you should perhaps be honest and write back, "While we were opposed to that, we now understand that hydro rates are important to people and homeowners."

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, Speaker: At the end of my response, I made a motion that second and third reading be given to Bill 5. At that point of time, there were no noes in this House and one aye from the member for Thunder Bay. I therefore request you to rule—

The Acting Speaker: You had the floor for two minutes for comments and questions. At the end of that period, your time expires and somebody else would have the floor. You went on, and I assume what you're telling me that you told us was said after you no longer had the floor. That is not a point of order.

Mr Gerretsen: Mr Speaker, then I rise on a new point of order: I would request that this assembly give unanimous consent to Bill 5 and give second and third reading to that bill at this time. I ask for unanimous consent.

The Acting Speaker: Is there consent? It is not agreed.

Further debate?

1620

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I am delighted to join the debate on the speech from the throne. I would like to ask that my time be split with the member for Hamilton Mountain.

To continue the debate on the speech from the throne of a few days ago, it wasn't so much a speech from the throne. Normally at the beginning of a new session, a government introduces, through a so-called speech from the throne, their intentions, their ideas, their priorities to govern not only this House, but the people of Ontario. What the throne speech failed to address was those "must" principles, if you will, priorities that are so dear to the people of Ontario. What is so disappointing about the speech from the throne is that there was absolutely nothing that addressed the crisis, the chaos or the cuts, and if I may I will add a fourth C, the commotion the government has created since coming to power in 1995.

You would think that a top priority of the government in the coming session, after a four-month hiatus, would be dealing with the crisis in the health care system or the chaos in the education system. I don't have to tell you what that is, because we went through three very tumultuous weeks involving our students, parents, teachers, boards and whatever, and we are still dealing with it.

You would think the government would have come up with a priority list, addressing the extreme needs created by the crisis in our health care needs. As we are standing in the House today, we have the nurses in a new crisis, fighting for their rights. Why are we there? That's what the government wanted. It's because of what the government did over the last five, six, seven years.

With the environment, a very important area, there is nothing in the speech from the throne.

Energy: oh yes, it's going to come—electricity, gasoline, heating oil and gas. There is nothing to address that in this throne speech. I'll come to electrical energy for the people of Ontario—not only for the individual members of our society but also for the business community in Ontario, and especially the small business people—but I want to touch first on the two most important issues, because with limited time I won't be able to address even a very minute part of what is in the speech from the throne or what I wanted to talk about.

Let me address the health care system. We are in disarray today because when this government came into power they said, "We are going to change. We are going to revolutionize. We are going to reform. We are going to bring in changes." We said, "Slow down and do it right," the same thing we said when they wanted to amalgamate the various municipalities, including Toronto. We said, "Slow down and get it right." But they've been bulling ahead, and they still do, and that is why we are in this mess today.

They wanted to create a so-called hospital restructuring commission with the power to do whatever they wanted. We said that the way they are going about it is wrong. We went on for three years and, Mr Premier, you knew it. They knew that what they were doing and the way they were going about it was wrong. So it took about three to three and a half years to realize that. Then what happened? The hospital restructuring commission was disbanded. Unfortunately I have to say it was disbanded without putting in place any other facilities to take the slack created by the action of closing hospitals by their restructuring commission.

On top of that, what did the government do? They established the local community care centres and they gave them some funding. They did away with some of the agencies that had been providing a wonderful service for many years. What happened was that they cannot provide enough service to home care facilities because of funding. Of course, if long-term-care patients were getting five, six, seven hours a week of care in their homes, today they are lucky if they get two hours a week.

Are we better off with the health care system today? Little did we know that the government had something else in mind: to eventually create chaos and a crisis and say, "This is not working. We have to do something. We've got to move to privatize, Americanize and create a two-tier system in the health care system." Now it is very much in the open.

When the Premier says, "Well, what's the fear about looking at private not only health care systems any more but private hospitals?" My people dread to think that we will have private health care and private hospitals. I hope the government really comes to their senses and abandon this idea which they know is not going to work in the best interests of the people of Ontario.

Education: chaos and crisis. Can our kids in Ontario really get the best education when they grow up going from one crisis to another? We've had four interruptions in the last two years. Parents are truly, and rightly so, annoyed at the fact that they don't want to have their kids grow up in the type of environment where every few months there is a crisis created by the government because of funding. Truly I can feel for those students and parents, who have to live in fear that every few months or so their schools will be closed, the kids out of the classrooms and a new crisis created. I don't think this is what we want.

Time is running out but I want to address quickly the energy crisis that we are facing smack in the face. I have

to say that the people who are going to suffer the brunt of the extremely high cost of electricity energy are going to be individual Ontarians, and especially seniors. And it is going to affect very adversely the business community, especially the small business community in Ontario. The first ones will be in the tourist industry, those small businesses or small industries. When they see their power double and triple three or four times, they will be the first ones to go out of business. What is the government going to do about that? There is absolutely nothing in this budget which takes into consideration the plight of small business people.

Ask the people of Ontario, are we better off today? Are we creating a better climate, better living conditions? Do we have better education, a better health care system, emergency services in hospitals? No. The answer is no.

Who created the crises? We've fired 10,000 nurses—\$400 million to let them go. Now we go to Texas to beg them to come back. What about doctors? I think we have some 120 communities in Ontario, especially in northern and in southwestern Ontario, with an extreme shortage of doctors. Do you think the government is really doing something about that? It is a shame.

I have to say that we, as Liberals, on this side of the House, with Dalton McGuinty as our leader, have put on the table good policies, good solutions, and I hope the government will apply more of those Liberal solutions to the government of the day. I have to say that, as it has been presented, this speech from the throne is a total disappointment.

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Mrs Bountrogianni: The citizens of Ontario are increasingly voicing their concern with a visionless government, and this throne speech just reinforced their belief. This government is adrift and directionless, whether it's in health care, energy or education.

The people are concerned about the lack of security they experience in their jobs, education and access to post-secondary. A recent poll showed that 64% of individuals expressed finding it increasingly hard to afford college and university, and 62% of individuals recognize that tax cuts aren't enough, that we need a long-term plan to protect our prosperity. As Liberals, we believe in smart tax cuts targeted to benefit the working families of Ontario, to enable those who need financial support to access higher education.

Between 1990 and 2000, operating grants for full-time university students declined, after adjusting for inflation, by 29%. Between 1992 and 1999, full-time faculty declined by approximately 12% and there's an impending faculty shortage coming ever so quickly. From 1990 to 1999, university tuition fees more than doubled, from \$1,639 to \$3,951, on average, for an undergraduate degree. Between 1990 and 1999, colleges experienced a 35% increase in enrolment due to demographics but experienced a 39.9% decrease in funding. In 1990 per student funding for a college was \$5,775; in 1999 it was \$2,302. It is actually miraculous that the colleges are still surviving, considering this massive cut per student.

The post-secondary system in Ontario is in crisis, whether we like to admit it on the opposite side of the House or not. We are 59th out of 60 jurisdictions in North America in our provincial per capita funding. If on budget day we don't increase funding, we will quickly fall to last, behind Bush's Texas.

There is a 35% accessibility rate to post-secondary institutions in Ontario, and yes, that is an improvement, but in the United States the accessibility rate is 60%. Preparation for the double cohort is insufficient if not supported with additional operating dollars. Yes, Super-Build has added a lot of money to the system, although flawed with respect to its process in matching dollars, but it will just be empty buildings if we don't add to the operating costs of our post-secondary institutions.

The first wave of the double cohort will hit Ontario's institutions in 2003, but less remarked upon is the second wave which will hit the 905 belt in 2007. The 905 belt has the largest-growing number of 18- to 24-year-olds in the country—not even in the province; in the country—yet York, Ryerson and the U of T have asked for capital funds to build in the 905 belt and have been rejected. The SuperBuild funding did not take into account where the demographic bulges are going to occur, and Trent and Sir Sandford Fleming received more space allocations than York and U of T. All the power to Trent and Sir Sandford Fleming, but this hardly seems logical in the grand scheme of things.

The universities have made a commitment to provide the spaces required to accommodate the first wave of the double cohort, but on the condition that there is full average funding available for each of those additional students. At present there are a number of students who are being funded by the universities but are not—

The Acting Speaker: Would you please stop the clock. I'm leaving the chair momentarily. I had a point of order brought up by the Minister of Labour and I thought I should address it before I leave. He had a point of order about an event that happened a little earlier this afternoon between the Chair and the member for Waterloo-Wellington. I just wanted to inform the House that it was not a point of order. I'm sure he'll get that message.

My apologies for interrupting. The Chair recognizes the member for Hamilton Mountain.

Mrs Bountrogianni: Thank you, Mr Speaker. That was an important interruption.

The full average funding simply means that we stay where we are, where we don't even get worse than where we are. The price tag for that is an additional \$500 million, and the university's ability to deliver on this commitment is dependent on this funding.

SuperBuild was a flawed competition. It did not account for where the demographic growth would occur. The post-secondary system can accommodate the numbers, but will students really apply for spaces that the government has created? It hasn't been on target for all of the programs.

With respect to operating grants, universities and colleges need to be treated fairly but not identically. The

government's cookie-cutter approach to funding does not allow for innovation, creativity or outside-the-box solutions to providing quality post-secondary education.

The post-secondary system is increasingly depending upon private sector dollars, but tied by government agenda, dollars are slow to materialize. We desperately need this full average funding just to accommodate the double cohort, but universities also need longer-term funding in place to hire additional professors, to account for demographic shifts and to pay for deferred maintenance.

In the next 10 years many of our professors will be retiring. One of the challenges for us is that in the next five years many of the US professors will be retiring, and they are already up here trying to recruit our best.

The marginal versus national average costs need to be commented on. The struggling institutions which committed to accommodating the increased demand can't handle the extra students without this full average funding. In some ways, these institutions have been punished for taking on more students than they can afford, because now, the way the tuition funding and the operating grants work, it's pretty well fixed and inflexible.

Private sector dollars help to support the work in post-secondary, and help through endowments is always needed but should not replace government investment. The dangerous scenario here with private sector dollars is that it's great in the good times, financially, but with a volatile stock market and the downsizing and market corrections of the last few months, the private sector often no longer has huge profits and has to back out of partnerships and commitments. This has happened in Ottawa with Nortel and Corel. A number of programs at the University of Ottawa, at Carleton and at Algonquin College are going to end because of the downturn in the economy.

The key performance indicators which this funding is based on have been called "intellectually vacant." The minister herself admitted that they needed to be improved. That was almost a year ago, and we haven't heard any signs of improvement.

There is a huge difficulty in delivering nursing programs, particularly in the northern colleges. There is still some confusion about specifics. I made a member's statement yesterday about the applied degrees. The colleges are still waiting for permission to proceed with these applied degrees. This affects nursing and other programs directly, and not all universities and colleges have agreements. This challenges their funding and setting of tuition levels and program delivery.

Algonquin College lost some \$1 million a year on its nursing program. It decided it was worth it due to the demand for the nurses in the north, but it's simply not sustainable. This program is at risk if the government doesn't wake up to the need for more dollars in the colleges.

The Association of Canadian Universities has shown that the participation rates, due to demographics, have increased. However, the funding that the federal govern-

ment has given to all the provinces has been dealt with differently in all the provinces. In Ontario, instead of giving the millennium scholarships to the students over and above, which was the spirit of the agreement, this government sucked that money up in general revenues and gave back the loan forgiveness that they would have given anyway. In other words, there was no net value to the students. In fact, some students were at a disadvantage because the Canadian millennium scholarship is taxable.

The government's own task force, which I confess I was afraid of—I thought they would just tell the government what they wanted to hear, that it would be a whitewash, but they have developed a very good document, *Portals and Pathways: A Review of Postsecondary Education in Ontario*. One of the most interesting aspects of this report is the strong recommendation for increased funding in post-secondary education. Assessing the adequacy of government funding did not fall within the mandate of the task force, yet a significant portion of the report is dedicated to this very topic. This is the government's task force.

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What are their findings? That Ontario's post-secondary institutions are both cost-effective and innovative, efficient and fiscally responsible. "However, we are at a crossroads," the report says. The projected revenue gap threatens the very survival of Ontario's post-secondary institutions. In order for growth needs to be met, additional sources of revenue beyond tuition fees will need to be found. Tuition as a percentage of operating revenue has climbed to 39.1% in this province. At Brock, it's 46.5% and at Nipissing, 49.5%. The university students at Nipissing are funding half their education. It's as if the government has forgotten that they exist.

Institutions are aging. Deferred maintenance costs—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr Christopherson: Let me commend my colleagues from York West and Hamilton Mountain for pointing out a number of areas where we on this side of the House feel the government is letting down the people of Ontario. I thought the member from York West asked a very pertinent question. He posed the question to us all, "Are we better off?"—not exactly an original approach to politics but one that's very effective when it's real. The fact of the matter is, this is a good time to apply that political examination of what's happening. Are we better off? Does the average person in Ontario believe that the health care system is better now than when Mike Harris took power in 1995? Certainly the education system, as also remarked by my colleague the member for Hamilton Mountain, when she talked about tuition increases and talked about the importance of investing in our education system—all of it: does anyone actually believe that the education system in Ontario is better today than it was in 1995?

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): Of course.

Mr Christopherson: You hear the government backbenchers holler out, "Of course." That shows just about

how much thought they put into this. If the Premier says this is good, they all say, yea, and if it's the opposition saying it's bad, then they're opposed to that. I invite the member who said that to come on into Hamilton. Come on in and meet with Ray Mulholland, the chair of the school board, and let's talk to Ray about what your funding formula means for special education in Hamilton. I don't see him taking me up on it, but I leave that offer there. Come on into Hamilton and tell Ray Mulholland, the chair of our board, that our education system is better. You look him right in the eye and then look at the kids in Hamilton and you tell them it's better.

Mr Bob Wood (London West): We heard a bit of doom and gloom earlier this afternoon. I don't think that doom and gloom is particularly well-founded. When we take a look at the student achievement scores in our education system, we find that they're going up. That, to me, means we're achieving better student achievement than we did before. One thing is for certain: we had very little measurement of what was happening prior to 1995. To their credit, the former government began to understand that and started to do something about it. But I feel that we can now look forward to some objective and effective measurements which can then identify success and will be able to identify areas where more has to be done.

We also heard a lot of concerns about our post-secondary system. I think our post-secondary system is in fact quite strong and getting stronger. It was a matter of some interest to me, for example, that the Richard Ivey School of Business at the University of Western Ontario was rated for their graduate program as being the 19th-best in the world by the Financial Times of London, England. It was rather interesting as well that they are rated in terms of value for money and they are, by the way, at full cost recovery. In terms of value for money, the Ivey school of business was rated by the Financial Times of London, England, as being the best in the world.

So I think when we hear the various concerns offered, and there are some legitimate concerns in the system—I think all members of the House understand that—we shouldn't mistake the concerns we hear for a lack of progress and a lack of excellence in the system. I do note that we find a good number of people coming from other jurisdictions in Canada and from foreign jurisdictions to take post-secondary education here in Ontario. I think that is a strong vote of confidence in our system and in what's happening.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I'd like to thank my colleagues from York West and Hamilton Mountain for their presentation of the past, the present and the future. I think they've outlined what the speech from the throne lacks for Ontarians in the future. There's very, very little substance to it. In fact, to be quite honest, those of us who have followed the announcements of Mike Harris over the course of his tenure from 1995 on would probably now admit that they're both wary and weary of the rhetoric and the doublespeak.

It's happening in every sector in Ontario. Let me tell you that health care is inferior, education is struggling because of what this government has done to it, municipalities are pleading and crying out for help, and all the speech from the throne does is try to beat those partners up some more with what we call accountability. The reality is that when we ask this government to be accountable, when the people of Ontario, through the loyal opposition and the third party, ask the government members to be accountable, they bury bills, like they did mine last week, or they don't produce documents, as the Premier continues to do with regard to his travel.

I would suggest to you that if anybody thinks health care is better than it was when Mike Harris took over, they might want to come and visit Sudbury. Visit Gerry Lougheed Jr, who is heading up the Heart and Soul Campaign, the biggest fundraising effort in Sudbury's history, to the tune of \$40 million, because this government won't provide money for our new hospital that they imposed on us. It's the campaign nobody wants but we all have to do because this government isn't accountable to the people.

Mr Maves: I congratulate the member from Hamilton Mountain on her comments to the throne speech. She'll understand if I don't agree with all of her comments, but I appreciate her taking time to make the response to the throne speech. I've had an opportunity to speak with some of the members opposite, such as the member from Kingston and the Islands, and we spoke about the importance to one another of the changes to the Audit Act that were going to be in the throne speech and how important it is to bring accountability to all the institutions that we flow money to.

The auditor has pointed out many times that he's very frustrated that he can look at all the offices of our ministries and pick any little portion of any ministry he wants and do an audit on it. Actually, we appreciate that. We support that. The Provincial Auditor works for all of us in this House. Sometimes it embarrasses governments that are in office when they do a report and they find waste and inefficiency—

Interjection: Mostly.

Mr Maves: —mostly it can be embarrassing. But the reality is that he's the taxpayer's best friend, and I shouldn't just say "he," because we could have a female Provincial Auditor. But the Provincial Auditor is the best friend for taxpayers. Even in this House, if you take all of us combined, we're only 103 and we need someone like the Provincial Auditor's office to go out and do detailed value-for-money audits and find waste and say to institutions and to our ministries, "Look. You're doing this inefficiently. Here's a way to do it better." The auditor doesn't just point out flaws with the way things are being done. He gives recommendations.

We need to extend that value-for-money process to hospitals, universities and colleges. It's nice to see that all members of the House agree with that direction. I know we should have all-party support when that bill moves forward.

The Deputy Speaker: Response?

Mr Sergio: My thanks to the members from Hamilton West, London West and Sudbury, and the wonderful member from lovely Niagara Falls. It's always a pleasure to visit Niagara Falls.

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Really, are the people of Ontario asking that much when they say they want a clean, safe environment? I don't think so. Do they really ask too much of this government when they say, "We want an affordable and available health care system and an emergency care system when we need it"? I don't think they are asking for very much. Is this what the government is giving them? I don't think so.

Is the government looking after our seniors, their dignity? I don't think so. There is nothing in this budget, absolutely nothing. Day in and day out they are de-listing new drugs for seniors. On the other hand we see that expenses are growing more and more for those people, the most needy in our community. I think we on this side, and I'm sure on the government side too, over the past few months, the long winter months, had a lot of seniors crying about the very high expense of heating their homes. They were complaining, "We can afford to pay the bills or we have to buy some of the drugs that are needed or we have to let some food go as well." There's nothing in this speech from the throne for those people.

So, let's ask again: are the people of Ontario asking too much when they say, "We want a good education system and a good health care system as well, and a government that really takes to heart the interests of the people in Ontario"?

Mr Wood: It will come as no surprise to members of the House that I rather liked the throne speech. In particular I liked the commitment in the throne speech to enhancing community safety and enhancing victims' rights.

I would like to put on the record today the ways I think the Ontario Crime Control Commission can help fulfill those commitments. The House is probably familiar with how the Crime Control Commission functions: it provides policy advice to the government, it takes a look at research on the various problems that are identified with crime control, it conducts community forums. The last time I was on the commission, it conducted some 70 community forums across Ontario, from east to west and from north to south, and heard all kinds of good ideas from all kinds of people throughout the province.

When we hear these concerns and answer questions, that gives us a lot better feel for what the people across Ontario are thinking in the area of community safety. I might say that the commission will accept an invitation from any member of this House to visit his or her riding, conduct a community forum and get ideas from people.

The commission also gives awards for excellence in crime control. The purpose of that, of course, is to recognize both police officers and citizens who make a difference in respect to safety in their community. We also conduct conferences, which are an excellent way to

share the latest ideas with the various stakeholders and the public, to get their ideas and to show how some of these new ideas can be implemented in their communities.

Of course the question arises, as the commission does its work, as to which crime-preventing ideas we should most immediately look at. One that was referred to in the statement by the Attorney General today is, is the early intervention we're doing as effective as it could be in preventing criminal delinquency later in life? The answer to that, of course, requires work and study. But I think the research is crystal clear that early intervention—and that is the Healthy Babies, Health Children program we have—does indeed stop crime really when you get into the early teens and for a long period of time after that.

The classic study was the Perry Preschool Project, which was started some 35 years ago in Ann Arbor, Michigan. It has demonstrated quite conclusively that better parenting results in less criminal and non-criminal delinquency. Some members of the House will be familiar with a program that was started a few years ago in the state of Hawaii, that basically works like this: they use an actuarial table to determine what parents are parents at risk. These might constitute, give or take, something like 10% of the population. Once these parents are identified, hopefully before birth because some damage can be done prior to birth that's irreversible afterwards with fetal alcohol syndrome being an excellent example of that, they are offered intensive help on what it means to be a good parent.

What they found in Hawaii was that when they offered this help, the overwhelming majority of parents at risk took it. Of course, those who do not take it have identified themselves as people for the children's aid or whatever the equivalent is in Hawaii to monitor fairly closely. What they found was effective in Hawaii was intensive intervention. It was a question of doing it very frequently so that the people who were doing the intervention might visit the new parents three times or more a week to explain what you did when the baby cried, how you fed the baby, what sleep the baby needed and so on.

The assistance is given in a culturally compatible way. Hawaii is a very ethnically diverse state. They try to have native Hawaiians helping native Hawaiians. The program itself is by and large delivered by volunteers, although it is organized and supervised by professionals. A lot of the volunteers in the program are people who were actually helped out by the program earlier on.

The research tells us that they are almost certainly going to see a major reduction in crime over time simply because of this program, assuming it to be effective, which it appears it is going to be. One of the interesting immediate results of this program in Hawaii—by immediate I mean after two or three years—is they found a 75% drop in child abuse cases in the areas where they had the program introduced.

I hope we are going to be able to take a close look at what we are doing in Ontario, at what we are doing that is right, at what we are doing that needs improvement, so

that we can enter into what I consider to be a key to a substantial further reduction in crime in Ontario.

Another part of crime prevention is the most effective enforcement possible. As most members of the House will know and recognize, enforcement has a major impact on the safety of the community. One theory we find to be a very convincing one is called the broken windows theory, which basically holds that if you permit minor disorder, broken windows, that kind of thing, it is a signal to those who want to commit crimes that no one cares. The smaller crimes then lead to the larger crimes.

An experiment was done some 35 years ago that involved leaving a car with licence plates on in a shopping plaza parking lot for a week. They did that and no one touched the car. They left a similar car with no plates on and within a day the car had been almost totally stripped by various criminals. That really was a good example of the basis for that theory.

The classic example of that theory working, which I mention only because they were doing so many things wrong in enforcement and when they started doing them right they started to get such positive results, is the city of New York. The city of New York had, to put it politely, a very serious crime problem in the early 1990s. They added police and got some reduction in crime, but the big reduction came when they changed their enforcement policies. With that change of strategy and adding no new police officers, within three years the reported crime went down 39% in the city of New York. Over a period of half a dozen years, the murder rate went down by almost two thirds in the city of New York.

The classic example of what happened is the city's jewel, their park system, which is Central Park, which was, to put it politely, for those who visited prior to 1993 a fairly scary place to visit. What the city of New York did was, number one, send the parks department in to clean up the parks so that average citizens might want to actually visit them. The second thing they did was send the police in to get rid of the known criminals who were in the park. The third thing they did was change the rules to make it more difficult for criminals to be in the park. For example, if you're an adult you cannot be in a children's play area in any park in the city of New York unless you're accompanied by a child aged 12 or under. The fourth thing they did was involve neighbourhood groups in making permanent the changes they had brought about.

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The net effect of all that was that Central Park is now in the safest precinct in the city of New York. That's a classic example of effective enforcement policies making a really positive difference for a community. What the police found generally was that as they cracked down on minor crimes, they were arresting people who did bigger crimes, because criminals tend to do all kinds of crimes. Relatively few are disciplined enough to engage in major crime only.

Here in Ontario, of course, I think we're off to quite a good start as a government. Reported crime in Ontario is

down 28% in the five years from January 1, 1995, to December 31, 1999. But we still have a long way to go to achieve the level of community safety that people want. I suggest, however, that if we follow a good plan and devote adequate resources to it, we can achieve a further major reduction in crime in Ontario.

I think that another way of achieving some of these results is to take a look at the effectiveness of our justice and correctional systems. I was pleased to note that the Attorney General made reference today to us being asked to take a look at this question. When you ask people, as we did across Ontario a few years ago, what result they want from the corrections system—and surveys back this up as well as talking to people directly—here's what they say: the first thing they want is restitution to the victim. The second thing they want is the offender not to reoffend. The third thing they want, in serious cases, is punishment of the offender, and that's particularly true for serious crimes like murder.

Given that quite clear mandate from the people, restitution and punishment are fairly straightforward. The question of getting the offender to avoid offending is a little more complex. I believe that if we're going to reduce reoffending, one thing we have to do is create a more effective corrections cycle. By that I mean that what we have to do is get the system to focus first on what kinds of corrections work. That's easy enough to find, because there is some quite good research indicating what kinds of corrections activity will avoid someone reoffending. Then we've got to get the system to implement them.

What this means in practice, of course, is that the courts have got to give sentences that work and the correctional people must then offer programs that work. We then monitor the results so that we can make the cycle more effective. This will hold out the major possibility of replacing a cycle of reoffending—and we have to bear in mind that among our institutional young offenders, some 60% reoffend, and among adult institutional offenders, 80% reoffend. This will have the effect of replacing the current cycle of reoffending by a cycle of more effective corrections.

What I have just said probably sounds pretty obvious, but I think we don't do it in our system now as much as we could. We have to make sure our courts and our correctional system do this in the most effective way possible.

We also think it's worth taking a look at ways to involve the general public. I don't want to get too far into this today, because time doesn't permit. But I would remind the House that right now we tend to involve citizens in the criminal justice system to determine guilt or innocence—that's basically what juries do—but we give citizens relatively little say in the sentencing process. I invite the House to consider whether that is a good choice. The possibility exists, and the House will be familiar with the community justice committees that are being tried on an experimental basis now, the choice exists to give citizens more input into sentencing, and I think it's something that's well worth taking a look at.

One of the most dangerous forms of crime is of course organized crime. Ontario, as we know, is being targeted by certain criminal organizations as a jurisdiction into which they would like to move. I would suggest strongly to the House that we have got to follow some of the strategies we know will work and put adequate resources into doing something about this problem.

I'd like to leave the House with this thought: if we want communities that we can be proud of, communities in which everyone can achieve to his or her full potential, if we want schools in which everyone can feel safe to learn, I would suggest it's absolutely essential that we reduce crime to the lowest possible level. I think it's the duty of all of us as citizens to become involved and do all we can to further that goal.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments? The member for Sudbury.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): He's sharing his time.

Mr Bartolucci: Are you sharing it?

Mr Wood: I'd be pleased to share it, if desired.

The Deputy Speaker: It was not announced.

Mr Wood: I'll ask for unanimous consent to share the remainder of my time with the member for Durham.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Durham, you have not participated in the debate? Member for Durham.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I respect the members in the House. This is really a good sign when people humble themselves to allow me a chance to speak on behalf of my riding of Durham. Certainly the member from London West is best to exemplify this sharing, compassionate tone he's very familiar with. The members on this side I think try to commit to the people of Ontario and those listening today and those that'll read Hansard, heaven forbid—we are committed clearly to deliver on the 21 steps.

To me there's more symbolism in the 21 steps than just the 21st century. To me it's like a celebration. It's like a 21-gun salute, which really speaks to the dignity and honour, to the traditions of this great province.

I always like to go back to the basics. For those viewing today, what does all this language mean? The Premier, travelling the province as he has relentlessly over the period between January and today, May 1, is getting the message out. It's all part of an overarching commitment to accountability and accessibility for the people of Ontario. I know that for me and my colleagues—this side of the House is really all I'm qualified to speak for although I could make certain aspersions on the other side—always being available and accountable is certainly, a lot of people would say, to make the tough decisions, the necessary decisions, starting back, you might say, when they were developing the original platform.

It really hasn't changed all that much. Its faithful navigator, the Premier, Mike Harris, has kept us on a steady course to make and deliver on our commitments. That was to deal with the \$1 million an hour that was being spent in excess of revenue, putting at risk the very

security of this province. Many economists and those who would know stated that this province was at some risk under the stewardship, or lack of it, by the NDP and the Liberals.

I want to go further back on this whole issue. If you could bear with me in the very few minutes left, to me it really comes down to four guiding principles.

The first one is that you have to have a strong economy so that you can afford to have the health, education and social infrastructure we know made this province so great. In that, you can't write a cheque every time someone asks a question. That comes to part two.

Part two is the commitment to fiscal responsibility. Unlike Floyd Laughren and Bob Rae and some of his cronies, as I like to refer to them—backroom decisions were made there, the social contract, all the things that I'm sure were distasteful but nonetheless were also irresponsible.

I go back to the second fundamental, which is the fiscal responsibility part, and this is all overarched by the principle of accountability. I think the best demonstration of that is amending the Audit Act to permit all of our partners that share the majority of the money, the MUSH sector—municipalities, universities, schools and hospitals—to be fully accountable because they're spending our taxpayers' dollars.

But the fourth—and this is often overlooked. The most important thing of all of this is to have strong leadership, with the vision and commitment to deliver on the promises. That's what is absolutely dormant to the opposition, in two respects, actually. There is a deficit in leadership and there is a deficit in vision.

I don't like to bring this to a personal tone, as has been done by the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane earlier this week. I would say it's a series of bottom-feeders technically challenging a government that is prepared to be accountable and to make the tough decisions.

Out of respect for the members here I've spoken from the high ground. I've spoken passionately about my commitment, not just to my constituents in Durham, but on behalf of the Premier and our cabinet, many of whom are here today. We are committed to delivering better, more effective, more accountable government. Any government that fails to do that—and it could be argued that in Ottawa, if you want to move there for a little while, there is a vacancy there too that I see. It's the backroom deals. It's the golf course deals. It's the various things that somehow just don't stick to them. I know the Premier has had a good run of 37 years, but I think the candle has been burnt at both ends there and I'm afraid they imitate that very poorly here in Ontario.

With that, I appreciate the opportunity to bring some reason—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr Bartolucci: I would like to thank the members from London West and Durham for their comments. Although I fundamentally and philosophically disagree

with what they're saying, I appreciate the right they have to speak from their party's perspective.

I would like to follow up the two-minuter I was doing earlier with regard to why the people of northern Ontario and in particular why the people of Sudbury have trouble with the accountability factor of this government.

We've already talked about hospitals and hospital restructuring and how my community is faced with an enormous task of raising \$40 million-plus to help to pay for their share. We've already called it the Heart and Soul Campaign, chaired by Gerry Loughheed Jr. Thank God for Gerry Loughheed Jr, but he's dubbed it the Campaign Nobody Wants. We don't want this campaign but we have no choice but to have it.

But then let's talk about municipal restructuring for a little while, because that was the government's next attack on the community of Sudbury. They ordered the regional municipality of Sudbury to restructure from seven municipalities down to one, to the city of greater Sudbury, and they said there would be enormous savings. The reality is, the government took seven debt-free municipalities and saddled the city of greater Sudbury with millions of dollars of debt. We have a debt of \$10.3 million thanks to Mike Harris, thanks to his restructuring of the regional municipality of Sudbury, \$10.3 million of debt in communities that had no debt previously. You talk in this House about being accountable to the taxpayers in Sudbury and northern Ontario, when you've saddled us with that type of enormous debt to start off our new municipality?

Mr Christopherson: It's my pleasure to respond to the comments of the members from London West and Durham.

Let me say to the member for Durham that I think earlier he was referring to the Prime Minister when he mentioned 37 years, and I know that you were going to correct your own record. I'll save you the trouble. But I've got to say through you, Speaker, for the life of me, I can't understand why, in defence of your own throne speech, you would even utter the word "golf," given the current climate and given the current politics that are spinning around here. So I'm pleased to correct your record for you, but I've got to tell you, it leaves me perplexed why you think that's a winning piece of ground for you to move to.

You talk about fiscal responsibility. Fiscal responsibility is really easy when you say to all your funding partners, "Here's more responsibility and less money"—easy for you, because you get the sweetheart end of that deal. You don't have those services to provide for any longer and you've got a reduced cost. Beautiful. But if you're the municipality or the school board or the hospital board or, heaven forbid, a community service that helps people in the community, there is nothing responsible, fiscal or otherwise, about these kinds of actions.

I want to remind the member, when he talks about deficits, that we now have a bigger debt in this province than when you took power. Why? Because you had to

borrow the money to pay for your tax cut. He can play all the shell games about whether or not that's the direct money, but the bottom line is you cut \$6 billion in revenue to the province of Ontario and you're going to have to find savings to pay for it, and in that case you borrowed money by letting the debt increase.

Why don't you start talking about the health deficit, the education deficit and the environmental protection deficit?

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): I'd like to respond to the members from London West and Durham, and particularly the member from London West, who spent most of the time he spoke dealing with the Crime Control Commission, of which he was one of the original members when this commission was first established some time ago. I must say that it's an honour for me to sit on that commission, along with Mr Tascona, the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford.

Many of the comments had to do with the announcement that was made today by different ministers: the Attorney General, the Solicitor General, the Minister of Correctional Services and I believe Mr Jackson as well. They commented with respect to step 19, which talks about enhancing community safety and victims' rights, which is dealt with in the throne speech.

Just to repeat what the government intends to do, the plan is now clear with respect to this item: "The government will introduce 21st-century solutions, ranging from innovative civil tools to vigorous crown prosecutions, to respond to the modern challenges presented by organized crime." The Attorney General is introducing legislation on that specific item.

"The government will introduce legislation to protect children caught in the misery of prostitution." I'm sure the member from Sudbury will be interested in that legislation.

It will "introduce legislation that would permit victims to participate in the parole hearings of those who wronged them."

"The successful strict discipline program will be extended to adult offenders and more young offenders."

"The government will link all shelters and rape crisis centres to the information technology of Ontario's justice system."

It will act to streamline the eviction of tenants convicted of dealing drugs—

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mrs Dombrowsky: I am pleased to stand today in the House and offer some comments on the remarks that were made by the members for London West and Durham.

I have to say that I believe I speak on behalf of the residents of my riding who are quite indignant about the fact that we've had to wait since December 20, 1999, to hear the Premier of this province account in this House for the policies or the lack of direction that his government has provided to the people of the province.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): It's 133 days.

Mrs Dombrowsky: My colleague has indicated it's 133 days. That's a very long wait.

I know the people of my riding are so very disappointed about a number of things that were not included in the throne speech. One issue that was not even mentioned was agriculture. I come from a rural part of Ontario. The farmers and the municipal representatives across the province were promised by Mike Harris that he would introduce amendments to the Farm Practices Protection Act, and where are they? They were supposed to happen a year ago. They were supposed to happen last fall.

Municipalities and farmers need that legislation. They are looking to this government for direction and support in terms of how to manage farms, and what do they get from this government in the throne speech? An indication as to when this legislation will be introduced in the House? They have received nothing. The word "agriculture" does not even appear in the throne speech. The second-largest industry in the province of Ontario has been totally overlooked by this throne speech and, I would suggest, this government. I say shame on you to stand in the House and suggest that you're presenting direction to the people of the province when you're totally ignoring an important and significant sector.

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The Deputy Speaker: Response?

Mr O'Toole: In response, I really have to remark on the member for London West, as well as Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey, really exemplary members of the Crime Control Commission. We're in good hands.

I do want to put on the record clearly that I did refer to the Prime Minister as the Premier. In fact, we all know that he had 37 years in federal politics, and the Grand-Mère affair doesn't really stick with him. I can't understand this; maybe it's the Liberal press.

But there are two important issues that the member for, I believe it is, Hamilton West mentioned that I think need to be briefly addressed, and that was the whole issue with respect to health care. Frances Lankin started it under the acute care study, which I took part in as a regional councillor. It ended up with the primary care reform model that was brought forward by Dr Wendy Graham; the Health Services Restructuring Commission. This is not new. If anyone's been paying attention, everyone, including Roy Romanow, recognizes, and finally our Prime Minister does—they skipped it in the federal election. They said there were no problems there. So it's a long-overdue debate that needs to occur here. We all need to be listening.

But also with respect to education reform—it was mentioned briefly, as well—I really have to look again to the NDP. They were starting to turn the corner. They started the Royal Commission on Learning, For the Love of Learning, and the education reforms that David Cooke has brought forward are proof that we deliver on what are good ideas. I don't think any of us here have a corner on good ideas.

But the member for Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington absolutely has it wrong. Unfortunately, she wasn't here from 1995 to 1999. She forgets that we've already dealt with the Farming and Food Production Protection Act. Business activities were clearly modified in that.

But it really comes down to that actions speak louder than words. In fact, if you were to look at the commitment that Minister Coburn, and before him, Mr Harde- man, and before that, Noble Villeneuve—they made a complete commitment to agriculture, as I do.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlotten- burgh): I would like to share my time with the member for Kingston and the Islands and the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North. I do appreciate the time to comment on the throne speech for working families in our community.

Over the past few years, residents have contacted me on the state of health care, the problems in education, municipal downloading and agriculture. Just to talk a little bit about what the previous speaker had said about agriculture, I've been around here for a while and I remember your campaign promises. I remember what you said: not one penny from agriculture. How much was it cut? By 50%. So I hope the member remembers that.

I know the residents of my community are worrying about their health care system. In an interview prior to the 1995 election on Global TV with Robert Fisher, when the Premier was asked about hospital closing and health care, the then Leader of the Opposition said, "You know, Robert, it's not my plan to close hospitals." Well, you know what happened. The health care restructuring breezed into communities like ours. They closed the one hospital and made it into a long-term-care facility, and the other one would have to have extensive renovations. The community had to sit back and watch their price tag increase by millions and millions of dollars.

It is going to be an impossible challenge for our community to raise that kind of money. The hospital isn't the only organization or municipality trying to raise funds, which isn't possible, because the hospital isn't the only club or hospital or facility that's trying to raise money in our community. Working families in our community have to look after themselves first. They don't have a lot of money to give for hospital restructuring.

It has always been my opinion that both hospitals in our community should remain open and operate under one administration and one board of directors until the community has the resources to build a new hospital on a new site, and that opinion is shared by most of the residents of our community. Unfortunately, the throne speech unveiled by the government didn't even mention restructuring costs. Instead, it looked at two-tier medicare. The working families deserve to have access to universal health care.

Every Friday, my office is being picketed by a lady who needs dialysis treatment and has to travel to Brock-

ville three times a week—her name is Lynn Briere—along with many others in my community.

There's one thing the residents of Ontario shouldn't forget: the tax breaks they're all getting are all borrowed money and the debt continues to rise. That's very hard to tell a lot of Tories.

The throne speech also did not come up with solutions for the education system and the funding formula. The Upper Canada District School Board is geographically one of the largest boards in Ontario. It covers 12,000 square kilometres, which is 18 times the size of the Toronto district board. Our board includes eight different counties but only one town that's large enough to be considered a city.

Our board is predominately rural in composition, yet it does not qualify for rural and remote funding under the current funding formula. Between 1995-96 and 2000-01, the Upper Canada District School Board received approximately \$836 less per student. My office was told a year ago that the government was going to examine the rural funding formula. To date, nothing has been done. As a result of the funding formula, the Upper Canada District School Board is forced to make very tough decisions, which do not make the residents of our community very happy.

The downloading and health care are the biggest issues in my riding. But then we get to the municipal downloading that continues to have a deep impact on our communities. The province has downloaded things like highways, social housing, social services and land ambulance services, and it has put a financial burden on our community.

Roads and bridges are in disrepair, and perhaps you will pay at a later date for the money that's not being spent on these roads and bridges now. In my riding, there are currently six overpasses that are in need of repair. Three of these overpasses are in terrible condition, and the municipality had no choice but to put in load limits and limit traffic. These bridges pose a significant public safety hazard as they're reduced to one lane. This means fire trucks cannot cross these bridges; they have to take alternative routes. It won't be too long before we have a bad accident or a death in our community.

I could go on and on. I'd like to speak a little bit more about agriculture, which was not mentioned at all in the throne speech, although I do thank the minister for putting the \$90 million into agriculture, which he did after the previous ministers and the previous government cut the agriculture funding by 50%.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): I'm glad to have an opportunity to say a few words as well in response to the speech from the throne. May I begin by saying that I am very indebted and have great gratitude to the constituents I serve for the input they give me on a regular basis.

As you know, Thunder Bay-Superior North is a large riding with a number of hard-working families with very diverse needs. What the constituents I represent probably have in common—I think I can say this—is a desire to

improve the economy of our region and certainly to strengthen our industries and work together to improve our quality of life. I must tell you that I was not that surprised by the comments I received about the throne speech, which were of great disappointment. As is so often the case, the specific needs of northern Ontario are very rarely mentioned.

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I will acknowledge there was one reference to the needs of rural and northern Ontario in this political striptease of a speech, which made reference to improving the regional economies and dealing with some of the inadequacies of the northern and rural parts of the province, which will be revealed on May 7. The one thing we've all discovered as we watch these announcements come out is that the details are not forthcoming. The promises are made, and as usual they are broken. Certainly the details we're looking for are not there.

But I want to use my time, if I may, perhaps referring specifically to some of the issues that concern my constituents that weren't in the throne speech. It's difficult to begin anywhere other than the northern health travel grant, a source of great discontent to all northerners which was not even mentioned in the throne speech. We have been fighting for several years, certainly since the second mandate of this government, to try to get the attention of this government to recognize how unfairly they are treating northerners in relation to the discrimination of the northern health travel grant. We have done everything we can in terms of petitions, signed by 20,000 people, basically asking the government to at least acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the program. We pressed the government to at least do a review of the northern health travel grant.

After much effort we were finally successful, if that's the right word, in getting the previous Minister of Health to actually do a review of the northern health travel grant. What's interesting about that, of course, is that the review was completed. I suspect the review acknowledged the inadequacy of the program, and I suspect the review basically recommended that indeed major improvements need to be made to the northern health travel grant, but it sat on the minister's table. Now we have a new minister in place who has actually denied knowledge of the report even being in existence, which is absolutely stunning.

Certainly that is an area where we have seen what happens. We have seen that the government has agreed they must send cancer patients—they have long waiting lists—to various parts of the world, Thunder Bay included, where the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre is, and pay 100% of their costs. We certainly feel for those patients. But while they're sitting in the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre getting all their costs paid—their travel, accommodation and meals—there are also patients from my constituency, from a variety of places, who are receiving service and also have to travel but are not receiving that benefit. That is very upsetting.

I can only say to the Minister of Health, and certainly to the Premier, that we will not accept this. This is a

battle we've been fighting and, again, it's appalling that it was not mentioned in the throne speech at all. We certainly look forward to perhaps having in the budget some acknowledgement that there needs to be a change, although I must admit we're less optimistic than we might have been in light of the fact that the Minister of Health could not even recall a report was being done.

There are so many other issues I want to address, and I have very little time left; I want to leave lots of time for the member for Kingston and the Islands. Let me address some of the transportation issues which actually weren't addressed as well. The Minister of Transportation made a statement in the House a couple of days ago, describing it as Smart Growth, in terms of some of the things they want to do in a transportation vein. He made great reference to some of the needs on the 400-series highways, to the need to open up roads more quickly after accidents—I hope he will also include the north in those discussions, because certainly it's a huge issue in Thunder Bay-Superior North as well—but made no reference to any of the needs of the north.

The fact is that one of the real frustrations we feel, particularly in northwestern Ontario, is that we simply do not get our fair share of funding for highway infrastructure improvements. We have been battling for some time to get the government, the provincial ministry, to provide funds on a regular basis so we can at least twin the highway between Thunder Bay and Nipigon, a project on which there was agreement it was needed well over 10 years ago. The previous government put some funds into it up to about 1995. This government has done nothing at all, and they seem to not acknowledge that at all. We had a major discussion in Thunder Bay recently related to the Shabaqua Expressway, another important need. These are things we didn't see, and these are things we hope to see and we're counting on that.

As my time winds down, let me make reference to one other issue, and my colleague from Stormont-Dundas made reference to it too. It was the issue of the funding formula for schools.

The capital costs for infrastructure improvements in my riding are extraordinarily large. The fact is the funding formula puts no value on that at all. We have an extraordinary example with St Edward school in Nipigon, where we need a brand new school, but because of the fact it's a low-growth board we are not going to be able to get the funds to do that. That is absolutely crucial. So again we're seeing that the province is not acknowledging the specific needs in northern Ontario. This is of great frustration to those of us from the north, of great frustration to my constituents.

We will continue to push the issue. We look forward to seeing the Minister of Northern Development and Mines at the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association meeting in Fort Frances this coming weekend and hopefully he will provide details of his announcement, which is planned for May 7. Perhaps he'll let us know a little bit about it beforehand and maybe he'll make some other commitments, including confirmation that the

medical school that they have committed to developing in the north will also include Thunder Bay and Lakehead University as a co-partner and a co-location.

Mr Gerretsen: I just have a few minutes left to deal with the throne speech.

First of all, let it be said and known that we've been away from this House for about 120 days, since just before Christmas, when we should have been here in March and early April in order to deal with the issues that we have confronting us in this province.

What is government all about? Government should be about lifting people's hopes and aspirations, about levelling the playing field for those, for example, who are looking for education, our young people mainly but also others in our society, so that everyone can reach the maximum of their own potential. Government should be about providing necessary health care for those individuals who need it, in a publicly administered and a publicly delivered way. That's what people are looking for. That's what we are known for in this province and in this country. That's why the United Nations regards us as the best country in the world to live in. That's what government ought to be about and should be about. What's in this throne speech about that? What speaks to the higher aspirations and hopes of people in this province? Nothing at all.

There's nothing that deals with the special needs of certain individuals in our society. Over the past two or three months, I've had a number of occasions to meet with different groups in my community, as many members do, particularly when the House doesn't sit. I had an opportunity to meet with individuals at the Kingston and District Association for Community Living and some of the parents who are involved with that association, and also with parents who have autistic children, the parent advocates for persuasive development disorders. When you see what these individuals go through on a day-to-day basis, who are looking for a little bit of help from different organizations, from government, particularly once these children are out of school, once they reach the age of 21 and they can no longer benefit from the school system, and the kind of lives that these people lead as a result of having one of these children at home whom they want to take care of etc, I say to myself, isn't it a lot better to spend a little bit of that tax cut money that we all want and that we all like, to deal with the problems that those people face on a day-to-day basis?

The time isn't enough to go through the litany of documentation that I've received from these people and the pleading that they do on an ongoing basis with the Ministry of Health, with the Ministry of Community and Social Services, and it all leads to nothing. Yes, every now and then if somebody shouts long enough or pleads their case vigorously enough, there will be some help for them, but that's not the way it should be. Those individuals need help. Many other individuals need help as well.

Let me just read you some statistics. These come from Alan McWhorter, the executive director of the Kingston and District Association for Community Living. He states that in our little area of Kingston and Frontenac county, "There are ... 33 individuals in urgent need of day programs to which will be added the 11 young adults leaving school this spring. The resources available are already overextended. Some among the current 33 have been waiting for as long as eight years"—eight years, as the pressures and priorities committee for Frontenac, Lennox and Addington, a committee made up of different social agencies, worked to try to help these individuals. Why doesn't the throne speech speak to that? Why doesn't the throne speech speak to the fact that, depending upon whose figures you want to use, either the government's own or other organizations', we have a shortage of somewhere between 500 to 800 family physicians in this province? All over the province there are over 100 under-serviced communities right now.

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What's the government's response? Well, they'll add 40 more spots in medical schools that will take at least seven years to realize the benefit from. Why don't we take advantage of those 200 to 300 foreign-trained doctors who are driving cabs or doing other work in this province? Why don't we take advantage of those individuals, and fast-track them into a system whereby, if they have the qualifications to be a physician in our province and they meet our standards, we approve these people? Why do we make it so difficult?

The answer certainly isn't, "Well, it's the OMA's problem. It's the College of Physicians and Surgeons' problem." The government deals with those agencies on an ongoing basis. If there were a real willingness to deal with the doctor shortage situation, Speaker, you and I know that something would happen about that today.

What about all those students who are coming through the double cohort system? There are going to be 88,000 additional students as a result of the OAC year being terminated, and everybody in grades 12 and 13 looking for university and college spaces at the same time, added to the system in the year 2003. What does the minister say to that? I have this in a letter from her that was addressed to one of my constituents: that apparently 23% of these people can be placed.

There are going to be about 50,000 students who simply will not be placed because of lack of places in our universities and colleges once the double cohort system hits us in the year 2003. I've got a document here that comes right off the Web site for the Ontario Colleges Network that indicates that the double cohort issue will be with us for at least five years before all the students can be accommodated.

Now, that doesn't mean that just those students who are graduating in 2003 will be accommodated over five years; no, because if some of them take places of students who graduate after that, they're obviously going to bounce those students out of that particular year. The bottom line is that in another two years between 50,000

students in this province will not be able to be accommodated by our college and university system and they may very well end up being the lost generation.

Why doesn't the throne speech deal with those everyday problems that the working families in Ontario face on a day-to-day basis? This throne speech is totally devoid of dealing with the real issues Ontarians face on a day-to-day basis.

Mr Christopherson: In responding to the comments of the members from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, Thunder Bay-Superior North, and Kingston and the Islands, let me deal with the member for Kingston and the Islands first.

He talks, rightly, about health care and the problems that exist in health care. I would ratchet it up one more degree, if you will, and say that there's clearly a crisis in the health care system. Earlier today the government had the audacity to talk about nurses. Well, one of the flash points in this crisis is nurses. It's been mentioned earlier during question period that throughout a number of communities across the province, my own, Hamilton, included, there were a number of information picket lines put up by nurses to draw attention to what's happening on the front line of the health care system.

Let's remember that the ability of this government to say, "Well, that's the responsibility of the hospital board," doesn't tell, at all, the whole story. The fact of the matter is that this government, by and large, fired the thousands of nurses that we lost. Having spent all that money, hundreds of millions of dollars on severance, you're now spending millions of dollars trying to entice these nurses back, many of whom have left not only the province but the country.

You did that. Those were your measures. The Liberals aren't much better, because in the last election they talked about laying off public servants to the tune that I believe was a couple of thousand people less. But the whole idea of downsizing the public sector was clear for them too. The fact of the matter is that the only way we're going to have the kind of health care that we deserve and that, quite frankly, we've had in the past is to make sure the funding is there. Privatizing is about taking care of your friends, not taking care of public health.

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): It is a pleasure to be able to rise and comment on some of the comments that were made by the members from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, Kingston and the Islands, and Thunder Bay-Superior North. I want to concentrate, in the brief time that I have, on some of the remarks that were made by the member from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, because in those remarks I think there were some underlying issues that were not addressed.

Much of the remarks dealt with the various lists of programs that had been in place in his community. But what he failed to talk about, which is crucial to this discussion, is the fact that these were not paid for; they were in fact the whole tradition of looking at deficit financing. It was that issue of deficit financing that meant that by 1995 the taxpayers of this province recognized

that \$1 million more per hour was being spent. It is important to see that in the context of those remarks.

What we needed to do then was recognize the fact that all those programs were doing was simply making sure that for the future we would be carrying on the debt and the mortgaging of our future. It has been the work of this government to look at making those hard decisions of where we could move to make sure that we have the balanced budget we do.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I congratulate my colleagues who spoke here and outlined clearly some of the weaknesses in the throne speech that we've all talked about in the last few days. The point I want to talk about for a minute is in my own community: what the throne speech lacked with regard to funding, transitional funding and downloading funding. As you know, when the government brought in the legislation where a number of municipalities changed from regional government to one-tier government, they also promised there'd be transitional funding. In Hamilton they've let us down once again.

The budget process in the new city of Hamilton is underway. As a result of the downloading, as a result of being shortchanged by the Harris government when it comes to transitional funding, we are looking at cuts to health programs in Hamilton. We are looking at increases in bus rates. We are looking at increases in transportation service costs for the disabled in our community. We are looking at shutting down community pools. We are looking at a massive increase in the number of user fees. And we are looking at tax hikes. That is the reality of the Mike Harris downloading on to the city of Hamilton.

They downloaded social housing. There was a report two years ago in the city that showed that the cost of upgrading the current stock to bring it up to standard would be about \$15 million. What does the Harris government give us? Less than \$2 million. Another \$13 million has to be made up from the local tax base.

So we are going to see more cuts to local services. We are going to see higher user fees. We are going to see user fees on the disabled when it comes to transportation being increased even further. We are going to see bus transportation fees going up. We are going to see community pools being shut down. We are going to see health departments shutting down programs. And we are going to see the taxpayers of Hamilton picking up programs and costs because the Mike Harris government decides that they believe municipalities should pay for social housing, for welfare, all the costs that traditionally have been provincial responsibility.

I'm disappointed the throne speech didn't do that. I think the citizens of the city of Hamilton, when they get the tax bill and the increase this year and the cuts in services, have to thank Mike Harris's agenda.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I feel very bad that the Conservative member doesn't get an opportunity to respond. I'm really distressed about that. I'll have a sleepless night, I just want you to know.

I want to take this opportunity to comment on the speech given by the member from Kingston. One of the

points he started to raise but didn't quite go all the way on, and I'd like to hear his comments on, is this whole situation that we have now in Ontario where the government is trying to make us believe they've got to make a number of changes in health care. The Premier was out musing that he wants to go out and privatize parts of our health care system that have always been under the public system. His argument is, "The system is broken. It's in chaos. We need to fix it. There's a big problem." They make the same kind of argument in education. They say, "Oh, we've got to do all these changes in education because there are all these things that are wrong with the system etc." I just want to hear him comment on who he thinks put the system into chaos in the first place. I would argue it's the government, by underfunding our education system, our health system and municipalities, that has thrown that whole sector into turmoil, and now the government is using that as a backdrop, the turmoil they created, as the reason they've got to go out and make all these changes.

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I think it's interesting and I would want to hear him comment on the comments John Snobelen made when he was first elected in 1995. John Snobelen said, "We will create a crisis in education in order to create the backdrop to create the ideological changes we want to make to the system." I always thought he should have been fired from cabinet. Do you know why? Because he divulged a cabinet secret. I believe it was the plan, I say to those people watching and the members in this assembly. I want to hear the member from Kingston and the Islands comment on whether he really believes, as I do, that it was intentional, that the government set out to create a crisis in all of our public institutions so they can go out and make the ideological changes they are now making.

The Deputy Speaker: Response?

Mr Gerretsen: I'd like to thank all the members for responding to what the three of us had to say. But let me just say this with respect to the last comment made by the member from Timmins. I think a lot of people would agree that one of the reasons health care and education in this province are in the state of chaos they're in is so that privatization can take place. I'm positive that's part of the agenda. But I'd rather not deal with that.

I'd rather deal with the problems that are out there right now. I'd rather deal with what we can do as the Legislative Assembly so that Ontarians will get an equal chance at education, so that Ontarians will get health care when and if they need it for themselves and their family in a publicly administered and publicly funded way. Those are the issues the people of Ontario care about. We can do all sorts of analyses as to why it's being done, we can all have our opinions on it, but let's deal with the problems that are really out there and let's deal with the issues.

One of the things I did like about the throne speech was that they were going to do something about the Audit Act. Once again I urge the members of this House to pass my private member's bill. Yes, the member from

Niagara Falls had a somewhat similar bill in 1996. I introduced this bill before Christmas this year. The throne speech said you were going to make amendments to the Audit Act. These amendments have been vetted by the Provincial Auditor, who likes the fact that he will then have the authority to go after 60% of the money that's being transferred from the provinces to the various transfer agents right now. Pass this bill, because I fear, from the statements that were made yesterday, that you're not going to do that. Three ministers spoke about accountability here yesterday. They talked about all sorts of report cards that will just add more red tape to the system, but you are not making the changes to the Audit Act that are required. I urge you to support this bill and do what it says—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Further debate?

Applause.

Mr Christopherson: Everyone should know that the House is applauding because I only get four and a half minutes. In that whole four and a half minutes, let me focus on the issue of accountability. I want to talk about a couple of examples of things that have happened in Hamilton that speak, in my mind, the opposite of what you're saying your government is all about in terms of accountability.

I've mentioned earlier, standing here, that this government has downloaded on to all the funding partners they have. As well as adding responsibilities to them, they've also cut the money they've received. By doing that in all the various ministries and areas where they have a partnership, they've collected all the money they need to give their very wealthy friends a whole big whack of tax money through tax cuts.

I want to point out that in Hamilton we watched over the last few years a number of serious conflicts that have taken place in the community, between different parts of our community, that never should have happened; for instance, the elementary teachers' lockout last fall. The fact of the matter is that what we ended up with in our community was the school board and the trustees pitted against the teachers, but in reality it was you who caused that labour strife. You caused it by your funding formula. I want to say very clearly that it made it very difficult, because the ultimate culprits are here at Queen's Park.

What we saw in our papers, in our daily media, was the trustees and the teachers going through the verbal battles one goes through when you go through these labour disputes, but what hurt was to watch it happen and know that it was happening because of what you did. And you knew it too; you knew it all along.

I'll give you another example. We had a very prolonged labour dispute with the bus drivers, with the HSR, the Hamilton Street Railway, and our then regional council. Again we saw working people in Hamilton pitted against their local government, daily verbally attacking one another, as happens. The reality is that your underfunding and downloading on to the municipality put the fiscal pressure on the local council, which made it very difficult for them to negotiate the very legitimate demands those bus drivers were making.

We watched all this conflict take place in our community, and you stood back and said, "We're the tax cutters. We're the ones who saved everybody money." All you did was take your responsibility and hand it down to somebody else and let them fight your battles. I ask the government, where is the accountability in that? Where is the accountability in giving your responsibility to someone else and not even giving them enough money to do it?

One more example; I've got time for the last example. What happens when we finally bell the cat? When the VON went on strike, they made it clear that it wasn't their employer they were striking against and they said it wasn't the CCAC, which is the local funder. Those brave, mostly women, at the VON said, "This strike is against the government." Do you know what happened when they belled that cat? Hamiltonians rallied around those VON workers and at the end of the day this government was shamed into providing at least some money to go toward resolving that labour dispute. That's what happens when you finally become exposed for what you're really doing.

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: John, you may not like the fact that I'm being loud, but I want to tell you that when you live in Hamilton and the other communities and watch these fights and know they shouldn't be happening, it's infuriating, and it's all because you've decided that you're going to be the tax cutters and you're going to be fiscally responsible and give real governance down to local government and other local responsibilities, pitting people in our communities one against another, when at the end of the day you're the one who—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

On Monday, April 23, 2001, Mr Miller moved, seconded by Mr Arnott, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

"To the Honourable Hilary M. Weston, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario:

"We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has addressed to us."

On Wednesday April 25, 2001, Mr Hampton moved:

That the motion for an address in reply to the speech from the throne be amended by adding the following thereto:

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 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:

"deplora 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 extra-curricular 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 over-priced 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 work week, 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."

All those in favour of Mr Hampton's motion will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members.

Pursuant to standing order 28(h), this vote will be deferred until deferred votes on May 2, 2001.

It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 1803.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman
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| | | York West / -Ouest | Sergio, Mario (L) |
| | | Vaughan-King-Aurora | Vacant |

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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